This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

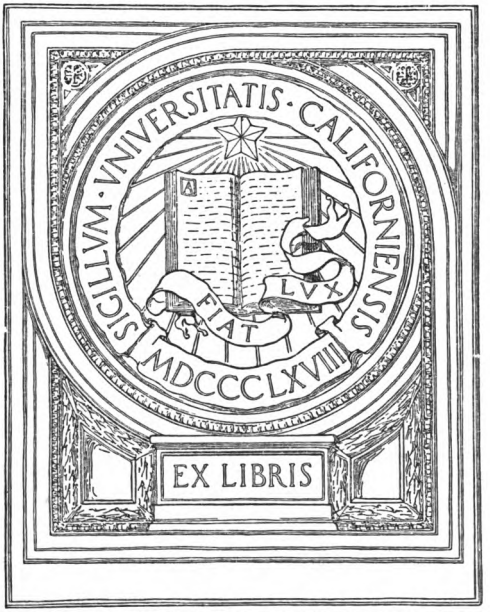
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

Captain Macedoine's Daughter

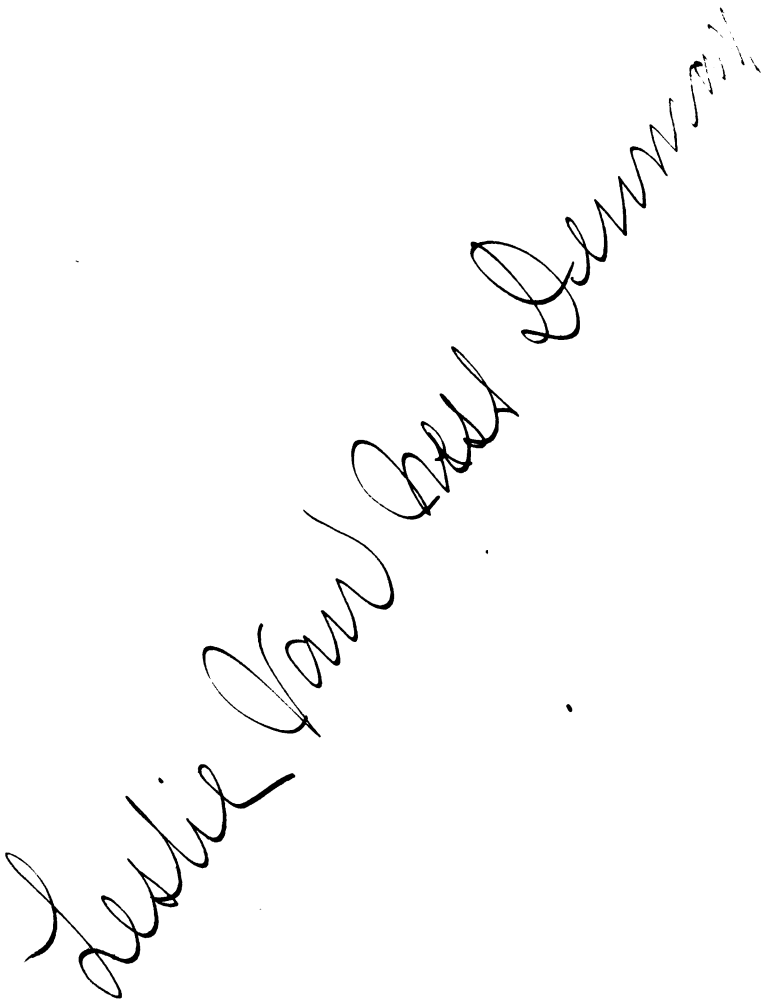
WILLIAM McFEE

Digitized by Google

GIFT OF
Mrs. William Denman



Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CAPTAIN MACEDOINE'S DAUGHTER

Digitized by Google

Other Books by the Author

ALIENS

CASUALS OF THE SEA

LETTERS FROM AN OCEAN TRAMP

PORT SAID MISCELLANY

Digitized by Google

Captain Macedoine's Daughter

By
William McFee

"It is an amiable but disastrous illusion on the part of the western nations that they have created a monopoly in freedom and truth and the right conduct of life."

— *Mr. Spenlove*

Garden City New York
Doubleday, Page & Company
1920

Digitized by Google

921
M

Replacing 4365 p.

TO MY

COPYRIGHT, 1920, BY
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED, INCLUDING THAT OF TRANSLATION
INTO FOREIGN LANGUAGES, INCLUDING THE SCANDINAVIAN

Digitized by Google

TO
PAULINE

M126524

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

DEDICATORY

THERE is an hour or so before the train comes puffing round the curve of the Gulf from Cordelio, and you are gone down into the garden for a while because the mosquitoes become tiresome later, and the great shadows of the cypresses are vanishing as the sun sinks behind the purple islands beyond the headlands. You will stay there for a while among the roses and jasmine, and then you will come in and say: "There it is!" And together we will slip and stumble and trot down the steep hillside to the level-crossing, and we will run along to the little station, so like ours in America. And when the train is come creaking and groaning and squealing to a standstill, I shall climb in, while you will stand for a moment looking. . . . You will wave as we start with the usual prodigious jerk, and then you will run back and climb up to the house again, banging the big iron gate securely shut. . . .

All just as before.

But this time there is this difference, that I am not coming back. I am ordered to return to England,

Digitized by Google

and I am to sail to-morrow morning. Now, as I have told you more than once, it is very difficult to know just how anything takes you because you have at your command an alluring immobility, a sort of sudden static receptiveness which is, to an Englishman, a Westerner that is, at once familiar and enigmatic. And when one has informed you, distinctly if ungrammatically, in three languages, that one is going away for good, and you assume for a moment that aforementioned immobility, and murmur "*C 'est la guerre,*" I ask you, what is one to think?

And perhaps you will recall that you then went on brushing your hair precisely as though I had made some banal remark about the weather. A detached observer would say—"This woman has no heart. She is too stupid to understand." However, as I am something more than a detached observer, I know that in spite of that gruff, laconic attitude of yours, that enigmatic immobility, you realize what this means to us, to me, to you.

So, while you are down in the garden, and the light is still quite good by this western window, I am writing this for you. As we say over in America, "Let me tell you something." I have written a book, and I am dedicating it to you. As you are aware, I have written books before. When I explained this

Digitized by Google

to you you were stricken with that sudden silence, that attentive seriousness, if you remember, and regarded me for a long time without making any remark. Well, another one is done and I inscribe it to you. Of course I know perfectly well that books are nothing to you, that you read only the perplexing and defaced human hieroglyphics around you. I know that when you receive a copy of this new affair, through the British Post Office in the *Rue Franque*, you will not read it. You will lay it carefully in a drawer, and let it go at that. And knowing this, and without feeling sad about it, either, since I have no fancy for bookish women, I am anxious that you should read at least the dedication. So I am writing it here by the window, hurriedly, in words you will understand, and I shall leave it on the table, and you will find it later, when I am gone.

Listen.

The fact is, this dedication, like the book which follows after it, is not merely an act of homage. It is a symbol of emancipation from an influence under which I have lived for two thirds of your lifetime. I must tell you that I have always been troubled by visions of beings whom I call dream-women. I was a solitary child. Girls were disconcerting creatures who revealed to me only the unamiable sides of their natures. But I discovered that I possessed the

Digitized by Google

power of inventing women who, while they only dimly resembled the neighbours, and acquired a few traits from the illustrations in books, were none the less extraordinarily real, becoming clearly visualized, living in my thoughts, drawing sustenance from secret sources, and inspiring me with a suspicion, never reaching expression, that they were really aspects of myself—what I would have been if, as I sometimes heard near relatives regret, I had been born a girl. And later, when I was a youth, and began to go out into the world, all those vague imaginings crystallized into a definite conception. She was everything I disliked—a tiny, slender creature with pale golden hair and pathetic blue eyes, and in my dreams she was always clinging to me, which I detested. I regarded myself with contempt for remaining preoccupied with a fancy so alien to my temperament. You might suppose that an image inspiring such antagonism would soon fade. On the contrary, she assumed a larger and larger dominion over my imagination. I fancied myself married to her, and for days the spell of such a dire destiny made me ill. It was summer time, and I lived on the upper floor of my mother's house in an outlying *faubourg* of London, from the windows of which one could look across a wide wooded valley or down into the secluded gardens of the surrounding villas. And

Digitized by Google

one evening I happened to look down and I saw, between the thickly clothed branches of the lime-trees, the woman of my dreams sitting in a neighbour's garden, nursing a baby, and rocking herself to and fro while she turned her childish features and pale blue eyes toward the house with an expectant smile. I sat at my window looking at this woman, some neighbour's recently married daughter no doubt, my thoughts in a flurry of fear, for she was just as I had imagined her. I wonder if I can make you understand that I did not want to imagine her at all, that I was helpless in the grip of my forebodings? For in the dream it was I who would come out of the drawing-room door on to the lawn, who would advance in an alpaca coat, put on after my return from business, a gold watch-chain stretched athwart my stomach, carpet slippers on my soft, untravelled feet, and would bend down to that clinging form. . . .

As I have told you, it was about that time that I left the *faubourgs* and went to live in a studio among artists. Without knowing it, I took the most certain method of depriving that woman of her power. Beyond the shady drives and prim gardens of the *faubourg* her image began to waver, and she haunted my dreams no more. And I was glad of this because at that time I was an apprentice to Life, and there were so many things at which I wanted to try

Digitized by Google

my hand that I had not time for what is known, rather vaguely, as love and romance and sentiment and so forth. I resented the intrusion of these sensuous phantoms upon the solitudes where I was struggling with the elementary rules of art. I was consumed with an insatiable ambition to write, to read, to travel, to talk, to achieve distinction. And curiously, I had an equally powerful instinct to make myself as much like other young men, in manner and dress and ideas, as possible. I was ashamed of my preoccupation with these creatures of my imagination, believing them peculiar to myself, and I hurried from them as one hurries from shabby relations. But before I was aware of it I had fallen into the toils of another dream-woman, an experienced, rapacious, and disdainful woman. I saw her in studios, where she talked without noticing me save out of the corner of her eye. I saw her at picture exhibitions, where she stood regarding the pictures satirically, speaking rapidly and disparagingly from between small white teeth and holding extravagant furs about her thin form. I had a notion, too, that she was married, and I waited in a temper of mingled pride, disgust, and fortitude for her to appear in the body. And then things began to happen to me with bewildering rapidity. In the space of a week I fell in love, I lost my employment, and I ran away to sea.

Digitized by Google

Now it is of no importance to you what my employment was or how I lost it. Neither are you deeply interested in that sea upon which I spend my days, and which is to bear me away from you to-morrow. You come of inland stock, and the sea-coast of Bohemia, a coast of fairy lights and magic casements, is more in your way. But I know without asking that you will be eager to hear about the falling in love. Indeed this is the point of the story.

The point is that an average young Englishman, as I was then, may quite possibly live and prosper and die, without ever getting to know anything about love at all! I told you this once, and you observed "My God! Impossible." And you added thoughtfully: "The Englishwomen—perhaps it is their fault." Well, it may be their fault, or the fault of their climate, which washes the vitality out of one, or of their religion, which does not encourage emotional adventure to any notable degree. The point is that the average young Englishman is more easily fooled about love than about anything else in the world. He accepts almost any substitute offered to him in an attractive package. I know this because I was an average young Englishman and I was extensively fooled about love. The whole social fabric of English life is engaged in manufacturing spurious counterfeits of the genuine article. And I fell, as we say in

Digitized by Google

America, for a particularly cheap imitation called Ideal Love.

Now you must not imagine that, because I had, as I say, fallen in love with Ideal Love, I was therefore free from the dream-woman of whom I have spoken. Not at all. She hovered in my thoughts and complicated my emotions. But I can hear you saying: "Never mind the dream-woman. Tell me about the real one, your ideal." Well, listen. She was small, thin, and of a dusky pallor, and her sharp, clever features were occasionally irradiated with a dry, satirical smile that had the cold, gleaming concentration of the beam of a searchlight. She had a large number of accomplishments, a phrase we English use in a most confusing sense, since she had never accomplished anything and never would. But the ideal part of her lay in her magnificent conviction that she and her class were the final embodiment of desirable womanhood. It was not she whom I loved. Indeed she was a rather disagreeable girl with a mania for using men's slang which she had picked up from college-boys. It was this ideal of English womanhood which deluded me, and which scared me for many years from examining her credentials.

That is what it amounted to. For years after I had discovered that she thought me beneath her

Digitized by Google

because I was not a college-boy, she continued to impose her personality upon me. Whenever I imagined for a moment that I might love some other kind of woman, I would see that girl's disparaging gray eyes regarding me with an attentive, satirical smile. And this obsession appeared to my befuddled mentality as a species of sacrifice. I imagined that I was remaining true to my Ideal! If you demand where I obtained these ideas, I can only confess that I had read of such sterile allegiances in books, and I had not yet abandoned the illusion that life was to be learned from literature, instead of literature from life. And, moreover, although we are accustomed to assume that all young men have a natural aptitude for love, I think myself that it is not so; that we have to acquire, by long practice and thought, the ability and the temperament to achieve anything beyond tawdry intrigues and banal courtships, spurious imitations which are exhibited and extensively advertised as the real thing. And again, while it may be true, as La Rochefoucauld declares in his "Maxims"—the thin book you have so often found by my chair in the garden—that a woman is in love with her first lover, and ever after is in love with love, it seems to me that with men the reverse is true. We spend years in falling in and out of love with love. The woman is only a lay figure whom we invest

Digitized by Google

with the vague splendours of our snobbish and inexperienced imagination. A great passion demands as much knowledge and experience and aptitude as a great idea. I would almost say it requires as much talent as a work of art; indeed, the passion, the idea, and the work of art are really only three manifestations, three dimensions, of the same emotion. And the simple and sufficient reason why this book should be dedicated to you is, that but for you it would not have been written.

And very often, I think, women marry men simply to keep them from ever encountering passion. Englishwomen especially. They are afraid of it. They think it wicked. So they marry him. Though they suspect that he will be able to sustain it when he has gotten more experience, they know that they themselves will never be the objects of it, so they trick him with one of the clever imitations I have mentioned. Everything is done to keep out the woman who can inspire an authentic passion. And the act of duping him is invariably attributed to what is called the mothering instinct, a craving to protect a young man from his natural destiny, the great adventure of life!

However, after a number of years of sea-faring, during which I was obsessed by this sterile allegiance, and permitted many interesting possibilities to pass

Digitized by Google

me without investigating them, I was once more in London, in late autumn. I call this sort of fidelity sterile because it is static, whereas all genuine emotion is dynamic—a species of growth. And I realized that beneath my conventional desire to see her again lay a reluctance to discover my folly. But convention was too strong for me, and by a fairly easy series of charitable arrangements I met her. And it was at a picture-show. I remember pondering upon this accident of place as I made my way along Bond Street in the afternoon sunshine, for I could not help thinking of that disdainful dream-woman who posed, in my imagination, as an authority on art. This, I suppose, was due to my prolonged study of the Italian Renaissance, a period to which I had kept my reading for a number of years. I remember giving up my ticket to a sleek-haired, frock-coated individual, and passing along a corridor hung with black velvet, against which were hung one or two large canvases in formidable gold frames, cunningly illuminated by concealed electric globes. A haughty creature stood by a table loaded with catalogues and deigned to accept my shilling. And then, feeling strange and *gauche*, as is only felt by the sea-farer ashore when he steps out of his authentic *milieu*, I passed through into the gallery, a high, dignified chamber full of the quiet radiance of beautiful pictures, the life-work of a

Digitized by Google

man whom I had known. I found myself regretting that fate had not permitted me to remain in such an environment; but one cannot avoid one's destiny, and mine is to have an essentially middle-class mind, a *bourgeois* mentality, which makes it impossible for me to live among artists or people of culture for any length of time. I should say that the reason for this is that such folk are not primarily interested in persons but in types and ideas, whereas I am for persons. Flowers and trees, perfumes and music, colours and children, are to me irrelevant. But every man and woman I meet is to me a fresh problem which engages my emotions. The talk about types is incomprehensible to me, for each fresh individual will throw me into a trance of speculation. But only when one has lived among clever people can one realize how tedious and monotonous their society can be. I was thinking about the man who had painted these pictures and how he had delighted to frighten me with his obscene comments about women, when I saw a woman far down on the left, a woman in an enormous hat, holding extravagant furs about her thin form, and talking to a tall, handsome man from between her small white teeth.

For you will not be too much astonished to hear that this girl for whom I had cherished this sterile fidelity had become in all essentials the dream-woman

Digitized by Google

who had been the bane of my life for so long. Perhaps she had always been the same and the illusion of youth had blinded me to her identity. Perhaps, on the other hand, she had really changed, for she was now twenty-five instead of twenty-one—ominous years in a woman's life. At any rate, I had changed for a certainty. While I still struggled against the bondage her personality imposed upon me, I no longer struggled in vain. I had been drawing stores of strength from toil, from the sea, from the bizarre phantasmagoria which the countries of the East had unrolled before my eyes. And I think she saw this at once, for she had no sooner introduced me to her companion, an actor who had recently married an eminent actress twice his own age, than she made our excuses and proposed an immediate departure.

But it was too late. As we drove in a swiftly moving taxi-cab through the gay streets of West London, and on out to Richmond, where she was staying with friends, I knew that in the end I should be free. She was soon to be married, and in her satirical gray eyes I saw a desire to hold me permanently in a condition of chivalrous abnegation. On these terms I might achieve some sort of destiny without endangering her dominion. But I felt the winds of freedom blowing from the future on my face. I did not see then how it would come about: I did

Digitized by Google

not even imagine the long years of moody and unprofitable voyaging which lay before me. But she saw that her own ideal of masculine modern womanhood no longer appeared to me the supremely evocative thing she claimed it to be, so that in time, in time, her power would depart. I can see her now, turned slightly away from me in the cab, regarding me over her shoulder from beneath that enormous hat, studying even then how she could keep me true to that worn-out creed, weighing who knows what reckless plans in her cool, clever brain. . . .

But it was a long time! For years yet I saw her before me whenever I thought of other women, and her disparaging, slightly satirical smile would interpose itself and hold me back from experimenting with fresh emotions. Even when war came and our spiritual and emotional worlds came crashing about our ears, her power waned but did not depart. I had no choice between this shadowy, reluctant fidelity and a descent into regions where I had neither the means nor the temperament to prosper. And so it went, until suddenly one day the whole thing came to an end. You will remember how I abruptly abandoned the story upon which I was engaged, and told you I had begun upon a tale you had told to me, the tale of Captain Macedoine's Daughter? Behold it, transmuted into something you would never recognize,

Digitized by Google

as is the way of stories when a novelist of romantic tendencies gets at them! And what I want you to observe is that the inspiration, as far as I am concerned, was based upon your brief yet intensely vivid projection of your life in that dull street in a Saloniki *faubourg*, a street so like many of ours in the *faubourgs* of London, stretching away into dim, dusty distances; but unlike ours in that beyond it rose ranges of hard, sharp mountains that looked as though they had been cut out of pasteboard, and stuck against a sky so unreal in its uncompromising blueness that it seemed to be aniline-dyed. And as the days passed, and the story grew, here by the blue waters of the Gulf I suddenly realized that the spell of the dream-woman had been broken, that behind my story of Captain Macedoine's Daughter another story was working out—the ghost of a story if you like—the drama of the end of an illusion. My old antagonist had met her match at last. She tried to frighten me with her slightly satirical smile. She invoked the innumerable memories and sentiments in which I had been born and reared. But she had met her match. I took her by the arm and opening the door, thrust her gently outside. And then, while you were down there in the garden, I went on to write the tale of Captain Macedoine's Daughter.

There is another long-drawn shriek—the train is

Digitized by Google

leaving the station next to ours—and I take a last look out upon the well-remembered view. Across the shining waters of the Gulf the lights of the city are glittering already against the many-coloured façades, with their marble and cedar balconies, their bright green jalousies and gay ensigns. Already the war-ships in the *rade* are picked out in bright points, and the mast-head lights are winking rapid messages to each other. The western sky over the headland is a smoky orange with pale green and amber above, and the moon, an incredibly slender crescent of pure silver, hangs faintly over Mount Pagos. It is quite dark down under the cypresses, and a smell of humid earth mingles with the perfume of the jasmine.

Yes, I am now quite ready. No, I have left nothing behind, except perhaps. . . .

Well, it is for you to say.

Bairakli. *W. M.*

Digitized by Google

CAPTAIN MACEDOINE'S DAUGHTER

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

CHAPTER I

NONE of the men sitting in deck chairs under the awning were surprised to hear the Chief say that he had known Ipsilon in peace-time. So far H. M. S. *Sycorax* had touched at no port, and patrolled no sea-route which that quiet and occasionally garrulous man had not known in peace-time. This was not surprising, as we have said, for he alone had been a genuine wanderer upon the face of the waters. The Commander, who lived in majestic seclusion in his own suite, had been all his life in the Pacific trade. The First, Second, and Third Lieutenants came out of western ocean liners. The Surgeon and Paymaster were "temporary" and only waited the last shot to return to the comfortable sinecures, which they averred awaited them in London and Edinburgh. So it happened that to the Chief alone the eastern Mediterranean was a known and experienced cruising ground; and when the *Sycorax*, detailed to escort convoys through the intricacies of the Ægean Archipelago, awaited her slow-moving charges in the

Digitized by Google

netted and landlocked harbour of Megalovadi, in the Island of Ipsilon, Engineer-Lieutenant Spenlove, R. N. R., said he remembered being there eight or nine years ago, loading for Rotterdam.

The others looked at him and then back at the enormous marble cliffs which threw shadows almost as solid as themselves upon the waters of the little bay, almost a cove. It was not so much that they expected Spenlove to tell them a story as that these men had not yet tired of each other's idiosyncrasies—another way of saying the *Sycorax* was a happy ship. The infiltration of landsmen, in the persons of surgeon and paymaster, the occasional glimpses of one another caught during their sundry small actions with the enemy, kept their intercourse sweet and devoid of those poisonous growths of boredom and slander which too often accumulate upon a body of men at sea like barnacles on the hull.

And in addition Spenlove was easy to look at, for he never returned the glance. He was a solidly built man of forty odd, with a neat gray beard and carefully tended hair. The surgeon once said Spenlove resembled an ambassador more than an engineer, and Spenlove, without in any way moving from his customary pose of alert yet placid abstraction, had murmured absently:

Digitized by Google

"On one occasion, I was an ambassador. I will tell you about it some time."

"Rotterdam?" observed Inness the paymaster—Inness was an Oxford man who had married into a wealthy merchant's family. He said "Rotterdam" because he had once been there.

"Yes," said Spenlove. "Rotterdam for Krupp's of Essen. For three years Krupp's took a hundred thousand tons per annum of high-grade ore out of this little island alone. They took it in British bottoms to Rotterdam, and from there it went by way of their interminable canals to Essen. I know because I helped to take it. It was just about the time, too, that Chamberlain was preaching his crusade against the evils of Germany dumping her steel below cost price on our markets, and I was so indignant about it that I wrote to the newspapers. I often wrote to the newspapers in those days. I suppose we all catch the disease at some time or other. As a rule, of course, nothing happened save that the letter would not be printed, or else printed full of mistakes, with the vital paragraphs omitted for 'lack of space.' This letter wasn't printed either, but I received one in return from a fiery young member of Parliament who had just been returned on the Protective Tariff ticket. He asked for full details, which I sent to him. I believe he

Digitized by Google

tried to make a question of it in the House, but he ran up against the Consular Service, and that did for him. You see, our Consul here was named Grünbaum.

"More than that," went on Mr. Spenlove, sitting upright in his deck-chair and looking attentively at a near-by ventilator; "more than that, Mr. Grünbaum was resident concessionaire of the mining company, he owned the pumping-plant which irrigates yonder valley, he was connected by marriage with the Greek governor of the Island, who lives over in the tiny capital of Ipsilon, and he, Grünbaum, was the richest man in the Cyclades. That was his house, that big square white barn with the three tall windows and the outside staircase. He was a man of enormous size and weight, and I daresay the people of the Island thought him a god. He certainly treated them most humanely. Every widow was pensioned by him, which was not very much after all, for they used to have precious little use for money. You could get a bottle of wine and a great basket of grapes and figs for a piece of soap, I remember. He built churches for them, too, like that one perched up there on the rock above his house—snow-white with a blue dome. You may have noticed the other day in the wireless news that the friends of freedom in Greece polished off a few of what were described as

Digitized by Google

reactionaires. Put them up against a wall and pumped *mannlicher* bullets into them. One of these obstacles to liberty was named Grünbaum, I observed.

"But what I was going to tell you about was a man who was at one time in Grünbaum's employ, a man whom I had run against before, a Captain Macedoine. I don't suppose any of you have ever heard of him. He was a very remarkable man for all that. He wasn't a captain at all, really, you know. As it happens, I knew that much about him a long while back, when I was in the Maracaibo Line, running with mails, passengers, and fruit between Colombian ports and New Orleans. No; they were absorbed long ago. The big Yucatan Steamship Company opened its big jaws one day and gulped down the Maracaibo outfit at one swallow. And we all had to come home. It was a fairly lucrative billet while it lasted, and Macedoine, who was a chief steward, may have put by a good bit of money. He had that reputation, and judging by experience I should say at least half of what we heard was true. But what interested me when I was sailing with him was his character, as revealed by his hobby. For it was a hobby with him and a fairly expensive one, too, posing as an educated man of old family. It was the great preoccupation of his life. You might almost be

Digitized by Google

justified in calling him an artist. He was a big, solemn, clean-shaven person, with an air of haughtiness which impressed passengers tremendously. It was this air which got him the nick-name of captain, and it stuck. Two or three young girls, who were making the trip, came up to him the first day out, and one of them exclaimed, 'Oh, Captain, can we . . .' something or other. The skipper was a dried-up little shell-back who hated passengers and never came down on the promenade deck at all. The bell-hop, an immoral little demon in buttons, who had come from a reformatory, heard the remark and in a few minutes it was all over the pantry and glory-hole. 'Captain Macedoine.' When he gave one of the scullions a calling down next day, the man, a typical Louisiana nigger, answered in the inevitable musical drawl: 'All right, sah, Captain Macedoine!' It stuck. It hit the popular fancy. More than that, it hit his own fancy, too, for when he went home to England, 'retired on a competency,' as he phrased it, he retired as Captain Macedoine; late of the American Merchant Marine.

"But that was only a side issue. He let it be known, in the subtlest possible manner, that he was of ancient lineage. He had been heard to speak of Alexander of Macedon! Yes, you laugh; but you have not been to sea as long as I have. Such things

Digitized by Google

are possible at sea. I have had a second engineer from Sunderland, a chap named Philip, who claimed Philip of Spain as his ancestor. There was Captain Gizzard, in my old London employ, who had a genealogical tree which traced the old fraud's descent from the Guiscards of Sicily. No! Captain Macedoine's illusions are common enough, I fancy, among men. It was only that instead of trying to master them and clear them away, he cultivated them until they grew to monstrous proportions and he lost sight of reality altogether. Or if you like, he was an artist, working upon himself as material, like those old masters we read about who devoted their lives to the accomplishment of obscure technical excellences that only the *cognoscenti* could discover and enjoy."

"Possibly," murmured the Surgeon, smiling in the darkness of the evening.

"Well," said Mr. Spenlove, in a musing tone, "of course a certain latitude of analogy is permitted in describing one man to another, if we ever can describe him. That was how Macedoine struck me. The aim of his art was to conceal the artist, which I understand is sound æsthetics. And it was impossible not to admire his method, his style, if you like. There was nothing crude in it. So far from leaving nothing to chance, he left everything to chance. Take the case of his daughter. The brat in those

Digitized by Google

days was a god-send to him. I used to think she was merely an invention, he was so circumstantial in his subtly shaded allusions. You might say that if she hadn't existed, the trend of his emotional development, the scheme on which he was engaged, would have compelled him to invent her. As I say, I did believe at one time he had invented her, for he was always inventing something. In some bewildering, indefinable way, we became aware, week by week, month by month, of a fresh touch, a new phase of Captain Macedoine. I don't pretend to know what final frame he proposed to give to the magnificent picture he was making. Perhaps he didn't know himself. Perhaps he had no ultimate design. Anyhow we never had it, for as I said, the company was absorbed and we all had to come home.

"I admit I was surprised enough when I found out, quite accidentally, that he had married an octaroon. When I say married, I mean of course, as far as fidelity and maintenance was concerned. He rented a cottage out on Tchoupitoulas Street, where the mosquitoes sing loud enough to drown conversation, and the grass grows man-high between the road and the sidewalk. And there the woman lived a while and died. I was never in the house, but young Strellett, the second steward, who was lost when the *Toro* turned over in the Yucatan channel, was

Digitized by Google

married and lived not far from Macedoine's *ménage*, and I can imagine the place. Strellett had a little three-roomed box where he lived with his big rosy-cheeked Irish wife, and there was something very homelike about it, for all the carpets and curtains and a good deal of the table-linen had come from the Maracaibo Line's cabins. Sent ashore to be cleaned, you know, and didn't get back. I dare say Macedoine's place was even more completely furnished at the company's expense. They all did it. Perhaps that was one of the reasons we all had to come home. That was . . . yes, more than twenty years ago.

"I'm afraid, though, there were not many of us like Macedoine. We didn't come home to retire on a competency. New Orleans used to be what they called 'a wide-open little town' and there were plenty of ways of getting rid of our wages, good as they were. However, that's a detail. We came home, except one or two youngsters who struck west and got into Nevada mining plants or San Francisco lumber ships. I was glad to come. I had a few shots in the locker and I went down into Hampshire to see my people. I didn't stay as long as I intended. Who of us ever does? After the first glow of welcome dies away, we have to depend on our personal attractions to keep people interested. We

Digitized by Google

may keep the ball rolling a little longer if we get married or even engaged; but it is a sorry business after all. You fellows are for ever wanting the ship to go home. Well, you wait and see. You'll be glad to be back. When a man has got the sea-habit, his relations always regard him as a bit of a nuisance.

"I went to sea again. I joined a London Company which I always call now 'my old company' because I was so long with them, and have for them a peculiar sort of cantankerous affection. They paid infernally poor wages, they were always in a hole financially until the war made them multi-millionaires, and their accommodation was pretty poor. But for some reason or other men stayed with them. I believe it was because we were working for a private firm and not for one of those gigantic corporations without soul to be damned or body to be kicked, as the saying is. The firm were real people to us. They came down to see the ship in London River. Old Gannet—it was Gannet, Prawle and Co.—used to leave a ten-pound note on the Chief's wash-stand after he'd had a yarn and a cigar. Young Gannet, home for the holidays from Winchester College, would come down to St. Katherine's Dock and make himself squiffy with Madeira the skipper had brought home from the Islands. Prawle had been an office boy when old Gannet was young, and had worked up

Digitized by Google

to a partnership and married Daisy Gannet. Smartest man on the Baltic Exchange, they used to say. Yes, their ships were fierce, but men stayed in them. Even now, with old Gannet dead and Prawle retired, and the management paying poor whiskey-soaked young Gannet three thousand a year to keep out of the office, the old skippers and chiefs are still ploughing the ocean for them. You see, we know their ways.

"I went to sea, and kept on at it. You might say it was force of habit, for I must admit I could have had jobs ashore in those days. Not now. But then I could. But it grows on one, going to sea. And I was making friends. There's nothing like a shipmate who is a friend. The mere fact of you or him joining another ship and sailing away is nothing. When you meet again you take up the tale where you dropped it, years before, half the world away. But you must be young. It is impossible to weld friendships when the heat of youth has gone out. Interests, family ties, danger, sorrow, all may do something, but only when you are young can you make the friendships that nothing can destroy."

Mr. Spenlove paused, and for a moment there was no sound save the purr of the dynamos under their feet, the soft swish and suck of the waves flowing in and out of the undercut marble cliffs, and the steady

Digitized by Google

tramp of the Quartermaster patrolling to and fro at the gangway. One of the noticeable points about Spenlove was that he fitted into no standard gauge. Neither the Surgeon nor the Oxonian could "place" him precisely, they would confess. Nor could the more experienced lieutenants, highly certificated gentlemen from the Liverpool to New York Ferry steamers. With unconscious humour they "wondered such a man should go to sea." The notion that the sea should be peopled exclusively with moral and intellectual derelicts dies hard. The fact was, Mr. Spenlove was a connoisseur of humanity. He seemed to have met so many types that he unconsciously addressed himself to the fundamentals. He took the inevitable superficial features of one's character for granted. This made him easy to accept but difficult to understand. And so, when he spoke of friendship and youth, the other men did not laugh. They were silent—some with assent, some with doubt, and some, possibly, with regret.

"I was second of one of their oldest boats for two years and Jack Evans was mate. Jack and I became friends. I don't mean that the Mate and the Second of that old ship went about with their arms wound round each other's necks. We were, on the contrary, very often at each other's throats, so to speak. Mates and second-engineers are profession-

Digitized by Google

ally antagonistic. We had terrific altercations over stores, for the company patronized one of those old-fashioned ship chandlers who sent cabin, deck, and engine stores all in one chaotic heap. Jack would get my varnish and I would snaffle a couple of bolts of his canvas. But that would all blow away by tea time, when we'd go ashore and spend the evening together. Mind you, we were neither of us very good young men. We . . . well, we had some good times and some bad ones. We were shifted together into another ship. Then Jack, who'd been nine solid years mate in the company and was getting so angry about it that the port-captain used to avoid him, Jack got a command. I shall never forget it. We were lying as peaceably as you please in the top corner of the old Queens Dock, Glasgow. It was Saturday night and all was snug for a quiet week-end. Jack and I were in his room under the bridge having a nip, when a telegraph-boy came clattering down the brass-edged staircase. Jack opened the wire, read it, and then gave me a thump on the back that nearly broke it. He was a stout, florid-faced, peppery little Welshman. What I liked about him was his crystal-clear character. What he thought came out like a shell out of a gun—with an explosion. 'The old thief's given me a ship at last!' he roared. And he had to pack and get away that night to Bristol. I

Digitized by Google

went for a cab while he got his dunnage together. And I remember now, waiting on the platform at the Union Station for the train to move, with Jack in a corner of the compartment drunk as a lord, and snoring.

"It was in London I met him again. We had had a collision and I was one of the witnesses called by the company to swear our ship was innocent. She wasn't: she wasn't: she did everything she shouldn't have done—but no matter. We all stayed at a little hotel in the Strand, getting a guinea a day expenses, and we all swore black was white, and the owners, our owners, lost the case. They had already lost the ship, so we were told to go home and wait a few weeks until they could get hold of another one cheap. Of course most of the crowd joined other companies, but I went off to Waterloo to inflict myself on my people in Hampshire again. And it was at the bookstall that I saw Jack staring at the illustrated papers and jangling the money in his pockets. He was in a very shabby condition, I may tell you. His chin was a rich growth of black stubble, his round protuberant brown eyes were bloodshot, and his clothes had been slept in, I'm sure. 'Thank God it's you, Fred,' he splutters out, for he jumped like a cat when I touched him. We went into the bar and he told me how he had fallen on such evil days. His

Digitized by Google

ship had been away nearly a year on the west coast of South America. He hadn't spent a pound in the whole trip. No going ashore, nobody to speak to, nothing. And here he'd come into London River and paid off. It was easy to see what had happened. A young hot-blooded man with three or four hundred pounds in his pocket, and no decent friends in town. His contempt for himself was rather amusing. 'Take me away, Fred,' he implored. 'Take me somewhere where I shan't be tempted.'

"'The fact is,' I said, as we made for the barber shop, 'you ought to get married, Jack.'

"'Who'd have a drunken old swab like me?' he inquired, sadly. 'You know I've been brought up common.'

"He was very contrite, but eventually, when he had got himself spruced up, changed his clothes and fetched his dunnage out of the terrible little hotel near Waterloo station where he had been lured, he began to take a less austere view of himself. He was determined, however, never to wallow in the mire again. He was a ship-master. His plump, rosy face grew pale and drawn at the possibilities which he had risked. He was a typical British sailor man. Riotous living was really distasteful to him, but he had no idea of getting rid of his money in any other way. However, I missed that train and took him down

Digitized by Google

with me to Hampshire next day. It was one of the great deeds of my career. He fell in love the very first week."

"But what has all this to do with Captain Macedoine and this Island of Ipsilon?" enquired the small, precise voice of the Paymaster.

For a moment there was no reply. It was very dark under the awning now, for the moon was still behind the cliffs. Four bells rang at the gangway. Mr. Spenlove lit a cigarette and continued.

"Have you ever seen a sea-captain in the throes of adoration? It is an astonishing sight. Jack was what he himself called 'open as the day.' Mind you, I had no ulterior motive in taking my old friend down home with me. I had no plain sisters or cousins to get settled in life. Both plain and pretty in our family were married and gone when we arrived. We lived, you know, just outside Threxford, a small town six miles from a railway, tucked away in the valley of the Threxe, about ten miles from where that small stream falls into the Channel. It was a lovely spot, but so dreadfully quiet I could never live there very long. Over the town hung a high hill crowned by the workhouse. You see, it was the workhouse master's daughter Jack had fallen in love with."

"Captain Macedoine's daughter?" suggested the Paymaster.

Digitized by Google

"No, a very different person, I assure you. Madeline Hanson had been brought up in a very secluded way. It couldn't have been otherwise. Old Hanson occupied a somewhat dubious position in the social life of England. A workhouse master is not the sort of man either rich or poor want to have much to do with. He is like the hangman or jailer or rag-and-bone man; a necessary evil. But he may be, as Hanson was, a most respectable person. And Madeline, his only child, was brought up in almost solitary confinement until she was twenty. I believe she went to an aunt in Portsmouth occasionally. Anyhow it suited her. She was a puny, flat-chested little girl, very prim and precise, and would bridle at once when any one laughed or made a joke. I never discovered exactly how Jack got acquainted with her. At church most likely, for he was in full cry after respectability and went to church regularly with my old people. I know we used to go fishing together at first, and later I found myself going alone, for Jack was meeting his inamorata, and going for walks. Oh, quite above board. Jack was 'open as the day.' He lost no time in marching up the hill to the workhouse (not the first time he'd been inside one, he assured me grimly) and informing Mr. Hanson that Captain Evans wished to pay attention to Miss Hanson. Whether old Hanson was a man of

Digitized by Google

the world or not, I cannot say, but he certainly knew his daughter might go a long way farther and fare worse. Jack's affair prospered. I have often been curious to know just what they said to each other as they prowled about the lanes in the dark. I suppose it was a case of the attraction of opposites. For once, anyhow, in spite of novelists, the course of true love ran smooth.

"Of course Jack had his fits of jealousy. You see, he couldn't understand how in the world he had managed to pick such a prize without having to shoot up the whole town. He even suspected me of having designs on his happiness, and I suddenly realized the tremendous difficulty of reassuring him. You know, it's a delicate business, disclaiming all desire for a woman. If you overdo it, you rouse suspicion at once. When I said, 'Oh, no, *I* don't want to. . . .' Jack was up and prancing about the room. 'Why, do you know anything?' he demanded. I soothed him, telling him he knew I wasn't a marrying man. 'That be d—d for a tale. *I* wasn't either till I met Madeline.' I had a stormy time. The contrast between Jack's volcanic temperament and the calm, meticulous flow of his courtship was comic. I was thankful when he was finally married and gone to Ilfrocombe for his highly respectable honeymoon. And then, a fortnight later, I got a telegram ordering

Digitized by Google

me to join his ship, the *Manola*, at Newcastle, as chief. We were shipmates once more.

"There now began for me an existence which is rather difficult to describe. In cargo-boats, as no doubt you know, the skipper and chief can easily be thrown together a good deal. Jack and I of course were. But Jack was under the impression that I existed for the sole purpose of listening to his rapturous idolizing of his darling wife. He wrote to her every day, and read the letter to me afterward. She wrote to him every day, and when we reached port and the mail came aboard, Jack would read the gist of it to me. It was like being married oneself. He would lie back in his deck chair on the bridge on fine evenings in the Mediterranean and suck at his cigar, sunk in thought. And then suddenly he would bring out some profoundly novel and original remark about Madeline. I had Madeline for breakfast, dinner, supper, and between meals. It was trying, but it was nothing compared with the frightful time I put in with him the voyage the baby was born. We were in Genoa, and he wired home every day. I would march him up town in the evening and stand him drinks, which he swallowed without looking at them. And it never entered his head that it was possibly less important to me than to him. When a telegram came, 'Daughter, both doing well,' he

Digitized by Google

ordered grog for all hands, took me up town, and stood champagne to every Tom, Dick, and Harry in the Verdi Bar. I got him down to the harbour in a carriage and he wanted to fight me because I laughed when he told the driver that he was going to call the baby Angelina Madeline Evans.

"He did, too. Life for me became impregnated with Madeline and Angelina as with a domestic odour. That marvellous child haunted my hours of leisure long before I had ever seen her. As the months and years passed, and Jack and I fared up and down the world together, I sometimes wondered whether we hadn't both married Madeline. Jack was a model husband. The notion that any other woman existed, or that any other man could love a woman as he loved Madeline, never entered his head. He was perfectly satisfied as long as one sat and listened to him talking about Madeline. I believe he would have urged me to go and do likewise, if he hadn't been convinced that no more Madelines were available. I believe, too, he thought me a bit of an ass to take him down and introduce him instead of marrying her myself. But as you will see, she and I were not affinities.

"So life went on, and now I am coming to the time when Captain Macedoine's daughter comes into the thing. Oh, no, I haven't forgotten what I was

Digitized by Google

talking about. Time passed, and one voyage we left home with Jack in an anxious frame of mind. The child was about five years old then and she was sick. Something the matter with her throat. Jack was like a caged bear when we got to sea. There was no wireless then, you know. You would have thought there had never been a sick child on earth before. 'Fred,' he would say, 'I left orders—get the best advice, best of everything. I don't give a damn what it costs.' And he'd prance to and fro. He never looked at the ship. If we dropped a knot below our customary two hundred a day, he'd be in my room growling, 'Aren't we ever goin' to get to Alexandria, Fred?' When we did get there he fled up to the post office to get his mail—forgot all about ours of course. '*Not yet out of danger—diphtheria*,' so ran the telegram in reply to his own frantic message. I never had such a time in my life. He was like a man demented. He would catch me by the shoulder and coat-collar and glare at me out of his bulging, blood-shot brown eyes, his fat cheeks all drawn into pouches, and stutter, 'Fred, this is the end o' me. If I lose one I lose both. My God, I've a good mind to go home. I tell you I'm going off my head. If I lose one I lose both. Madeline'll never live through the loss o' the child. What shall I do, oh, what shall I do?' I believe he used to go into his cabin, shut the door, and

Digitized by Google

pester the Almighty with his petitions. You know, they say domestic ties strengthen a man's personality, stimulate him to ambition. I have not noticed it. On the contrary, it has often seemed to me that married men adopt the ethics of the jungle. Life for them is a case of the man and his mate against the world. The jungle reverberates with their cries of rage, jealousy, and amorous delight. What are literature and drama but the coördination of these elevated cat-calls?"

"Oh, come!" murmured the Surgeon.

"Well, isn't it?" demanded Mr. Spenlove. "What made this war so popular? Wasn't it simply because it supplied men who had been surfeited with love, with an almost forgotten inspiration? Hadn't we been bred for a generation on Love, beautiful Love, which laughed at locksmiths and made the world go round? And here came Hate to have a turn! I tell you, something *had* to happen or we should all have gone crazy. Captain Evans, with his exalted notions of domestic affection, was our ideal. We were becoming monsters of marital egotism. You remember that song on the halls:

"*What more can you want when you've got your wife and kids,*
And a nice little home of your own?

Digitized by Google

"That was rapidly becoming the sum total of England's morality. All men were 'men without a country' and they didn't much care even if they were citizens of a mean city, so long as their own contemptible little hutch was secure. I rather think the war has dealt that doctrine an ugly blow."

"Well, go on," said somebody.

"You must remember that Jack and his Madeline didn't simply look down on the rest of the world as sordid worms who couldn't appreciate such a holy passion. They didn't think of us at all. We didn't exist. Nothing existed—for them—outside that microscopic domestic circle. Madeline had been brought up to be refined, reserved, 'not like other girls.' She silently and unconsciously laid down a narrow-gauge line along which she and Jack were to advance through life, and Jack, who was one of those men who are very much what their wives make them, was only too glad to get his orders. And he, with the intuition of despair, knowing her to be besotted with pride in their child almost beyond endurance, gobbled hoarsely in my ear in the night watches that if one died the other would follow, and leave him desolate.

"Well, the child didn't die. I have sometimes wondered whether it was anything more than a sore throat. It doesn't matter. When we came home,

Digitized by Google

Angelina was on the mend, and the cable companies must have noticed a falling off in their receipts. I was relieved. I mean in mind. Jack tore off home for a night to see for himself. He told me afterward 'he nearly cracked Madeline's ribs,' he was so glad to see her. Mind, he'd only been away six weeks! Think of it, in the light of the recent years. Not that I believed him. Women like Mrs. Evans don't get their ribs cracked. No matter. My relief was speedily changed to grave apprehension when he came back to the ship accompanied by wife, child, and a nurse, and announced that he had obtained permission to take them a voyage. It was one of the unusual points of old Gannet's employ—he allowed each skipper and chief to take their wives one voyage per year. I had been through it before, and disliked the prospect. I have sometimes wondered whether old Gannet had a secret and sinister intention, for it is a fact that you can't honestly say you know a woman until you have been to sea with her. No woman looks her best, either physically or mentally, at sea. Oh, of course if you are married to her as well, the case is different. I offer no opinion. But I know of one young man at least who broke it off after enduring a voyage with a hen-pecked captain.

"I misjudged Jack, however. Jack was his wife's

Digitized by Google

slave, but he remained in command of his ship. You see he also had been at sea with skippers' wives in the past. 'One word, Madeline, and home you go,' came up the ventilator as I was sitting on the bridge after tea. I was astounded. It was a new Jack, or rather, the old fiery, original Jack. The next sentence, in reply to some inaudible remark of Madeline's, explained what I had thought was a quarrel. 'Well, we must have an understanding before we sail. I know what I'm talking about, dear. I've been Mate many a year and I never would stand the Skipper's missus interfering with the ship's discipline.'

"I was admiring Jack for this sagacious warning when there came a squawl from his bath-room, where the nurse-girl was washing Angelina. Mrs. Evans rustled across, crying out instructions concerning Babs, as they called the youngster. And then came Jack's voice exploding in amazement. '*What's* that gel's name, Madeline? *What 'd* you call her?' And a voice as clear, as soft and as pure as a silver bell answered:

"'Artemisia Macedoine, Captain. That's my name.'"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II

AND though things do happen like that sometimes, as I sat in my chair, quite innocently alongside the Captain's ventilator, and sucked at my cigar, I was taken aback. It was like a voice coming up from the tomb—the tomb of a buried past. In a way it was a relief, for I was becoming so involved in Jack's domestic life that I was losing touch with the outside world altogether. The sound of that name recalled to me my old, unregenerate, wandering self. I had not forgotten him. One never forgets a master of illusion, such as he surely was. But the very existence of so imaginative a man seemed doubtful in the company of matter-of-fact, open-minded, good old honest Jack. Jack's lack of the power of dissembling and allusion was devastating. He had no more *nuance*, as the French say, than a fog-horn. Think of a man who could say to the wife of his bosom, the goddess before whom he worshipped with preposterous self-abasement—'One word, and home you go!' Jack would have had one word for Mace-

Digitized by Google

doine and one only—Faker. But I have found, in the course of my rolling existence, that fakers are often more interesting, intrinsically, than careful, honest men.

"And I had heard, in a roundabout way, some years before, that Captain Macedoine had not only been an illustrious faker but a fairly competent swindler as well. We were discharging machinery and stores at Cristobal, when a young chap who'd been Junior Fourth in the old Maracaibo Line came aboard and had a chat. He was one of those who hadn't gone home. Indeed, he was able to take out his final papers—never mind how—as soon as he was paid off, and being a decent young chap, fairly clever and a good mixer, he had soon gotten a billet in the Canal Zone. For some reason or other he had liked me when we were shipmates. I remembered him as having no aptitude for the sea. He had a sweetheart in England he was always talking about, but he married in the States, of course. Well, young Cotter, with his little waxed moustache and his superior bank clerk's manner, walked aboard, shook me warmly by the hand, and gave me an immense quantity of miscellaneous news. What with the Yucatan ships calling three or four times a week, Cotter was up to date with everything happening from Galveston to Biloxi and from Tampa to Boston.

Digitized by Google

Did I remember So-and-so—chap with a squint, or a mole, or a broken finger, as the case might be. Cotter always emphasized a man's physical defects in alluding to him. And so the talk came round to 'Oh, did I remember that chap with the solemn face and the big stomach? Captain Macedoine we used to call him? Why, didn't you hear? Extradition order. Yes! The cunning old guy had a dozen opium dives off Rampart Street in full swing. Must have been coining money. No, they never got him. He had left England by that time. Nobody knows where he is now, I suppose. Smart, eh?' Such was Captain Macedoine to me as I sat listening to the good Jack sputtering in his cabin:

"'Great Christopher! And who in thunder gave you a name like that. What is it, again?' And then Mrs. Evans interposing with 'That will do, dear. She can't help her name.'

"'A h—l of a name for a servant,' muttered Jack.

"Well, poor Jack found that taking his family to sea was a more formidable affair than he had imagined. The fact was, Jack, although he had been married six years, knew no more about married life than a bachelor. He hadn't spent more than a week at one time alongside of his wife. Many sea-faring men are like this. The very routine of ordinary household existence is novel to them. They live

Digitized by Google

voyage after voyage at sea, dreaming of an impossibly perfect existence ashore, and their brief holidays, in their wives' houses only confirm them in the delusion that shore life is heaven, and life on board ship hell. Whereas, you know, it is really the other way round."

"Oh, I say!" said Inness, who, in spite of Oxford, retained his illusions.

"What rot, Spenlove!" said the First Lieutenant, a gentleman still unmarried, but rigidly engaged.

"Ah, but you forget," retorted Mr. Spenlove, laughing softly as he gazed up at the moon now high over the cliff. He looked very like a benevolent satyr as he sat leaning forward in his chair, his chin on his hands, his trim gray beard pushed out, and his curiously slanted black eyebrows raised—"You forget that I am dealing with basic realities. You forget that ninety-nine sailor-men out of each hundred feed themselves exclusively on dreams. You are like the donkey who imagines he sees a resplendent carrot hung in front of him. It is not only that he never gets the carrot. There never was any carrot for him to get. I repeat—dear old Jack Evans was not a bit singular in his illusions, any more than Captain Macedoine was in his. They believed in them a bit longer than you young fellows do nowadays, that's all."

Digitized by Google

"Well, go on," suggested the Doctor, and moved out of the moonlight into the shadow, so that Mr. Spenlove remained alone and appeared to be talking to himself.

"Of course, so far, I hadn't seen any of the party save Jack. I'd been ashore when they arrived—did I say we were in Middlesborough-on-Tees?—for I had friends at Stockton. I was really concerned, for knowing what a headlong, forthright fool Jack was, I expected to do or say something that might spoil his life's happiness. And here he was complicating matters ten-fold by bringing a nurse-girl, a 'governess.' And while I sat there pondering upon the possibilities, the Mate came up with an expression of immense cunning on his face, his hand funnelled round his mouth, and whispered 'Seen 'em, Mister?'

"I shook my head. Mr. Bloom, Basil Bloom, had been only a couple of trips with us, and I knew Jack had very little use for him. Mr. Bloom, indeed, was one of those extraordinary men who go to sea year after year, and not only do they never seem to attain to any decent mastery of their profession, but in their speech and manner and appearance they resemble piano-tuners or billiard-markers more than sailors. Bloom had a moustache like an Italian hair-dresser's, immense, fine, full, and silky, with moist red lips eternally parting and showing a set of

Digitized by Google

perfect false teeth. His papers were miracles of eulogy, his discharges, save that he had been in a good many ships, without blemish. And yet from the moment he had come jauntily on board the previous voyage, Jack had been straining like a terrier on the leash. Mr. Bloom seemed to do nothing right. It had been my lot to hear both sides of the question. Jack, over a whiskey-and-soda in my room, would bewail his fate at having an agricultural labourer sent him as chief officer; and next day, Mr. Bloom, bringing me the position and distance run, would twirl his moustache and allude to the amazingly incompetent persons who secured commands nowadays. Of course I sided with Jack. Mr. Bloom was nothing to me. He was the sort of man I would much rather hit in the face than shake hands with. The man didn't *look* like a sailor. He had no sea-going gear. Jack nearly had a seizure on my settee when he told me the new Mate was patrolling the bridge in red silk socks, patent-leather dress-pumps, and an old Norfolk jacket. When we began to roll off Ushant and ship a few seas, it appeared Mr. Bloom had neither oilskins nor sea-boots. To see him skipping along through green sea water in his dress-pumps, to look at the patent log, was a revelation of human improvidence. Here was a man the wrong side of forty, and he hadn't the sense

Digitized by Google

to bring suitable clothing to sea with him! At the table he bewildered, angered, and contradicted poor old Jack with political argument. Once, after getting his anchors fouled, and firing his clutch-blocks, and otherwise making a mess of things on the forecastle-head, he had the temerity to tell Jack that 'every shipmaster ought to have tariff-reform at his finger-ends.' Jack nearly had apoplexy. He managed to sputter out that 'every mate ought to have his job at his finger-ends, or else go home and buy a farm.' Mr. Bloom, holding his fine military figure erect and delicately preening his moustache, told me afterward 'That's the worst of these young shipmasters—they think insults are arguments.'

"Now I saw trouble ahead for Jack with Mr. Bloom on board. I don't pretend to have a very profound insight into human character, but I had an indefinable conviction that Mrs. Evans would look favourably upon Mr. Basil Bloom. Oh, no, I don't mean that my prurient mind was gloating over the destruction of Jack's marital bliss. Not at all. I never liked Madeline, but I do her the justice of proclaiming her inviolable chastity. What I mean is, I felt that she had more in common intellectually with Mr. Bloom than with us. He had a good deal of the fussiness of middle-aged shore-people, clearing his throat, coughing behind his hand, saying 'excuse

Digitized by Google

me,' smoothing his hair with his palm, and referring to things he had seen 'in the papers.' And in spite of his inadequate sea-going gear, he invariably appeared in a more or less clean stiff collar. A woman, I mean a genteel woman, will never utterly condemn any man so long as he wears a collar. This would not have mattered save that Jack and I invariably abandoned collars as soon as the pilot had left.

"So, when Mr. Basil Bloom, in a dirty gray lounge suit, brown Oxford shoes, a grimy collar, and a deer-stalker hat, bent over me and enquired if I had seen the arrivals, I shook my head and got up to walk away. But Mr. Bloom detained me. Had I not seen the nurse? Nice little piece of goods. And the baby was a little angel. Between me and him, he was good enough to say, we ought to have a very pleasant trip, what with ladies on board, what? And Mr. Bloom, settling his dirty collar and concealing a brilliant smile behind a hairy, ringed hand, walked off to superintend his neglected work.

"I was not such a fool as to assume that I could any longer stroll into Jack's room and have a chat. I am not afraid of women, but I regard their lairs with considerable trepidation. On board an old tramp steamer a woman is nothing less than a scourge. There is no place for her, and consequently you never know where you may find her. If you walk to and

Digitized by Google

fro on the deck, you are probably keeping her awake. If you go out on deck in your shirt-sleeves, or come from a bath with a towel round you, you are outraging her modesty. If you use the ordinary jargon of the sea, she writes home that the engineers are awfully coarse on her husband's ship. You moon about in a furtive fashion, closing doors and ventilators when you converse with one another, and pray for the day when she will quit the ship and return to the semi-detached mansion in the suburbs where she reigns as queen, Captain So-and-So's wife. I felt sadly, as I sat in my room, that my friendship with Jack would remain for a few weeks in a state of suspended animation. I got up several times, unconsciously, to go along, and had to sit down again. And as I sat there, the alleyway was darkened and the familiar stout figure and short red neck appeared. I had a little table in my room and as a rule sat behind it on the settee, while Jack sprawled in an old easy chair I had bought in Savannah, a chair out of an old plantation mansion. Jack sank into it and remained silent while I poured out two pegs and squirted some soda-water into them. I knew perfectly well, or thought I did, that he needed some restorative after his recent adventures. He drank it thirstily and set the glass on the table.

"'Fred,' he said, in the cautious whisper which, as

Digitized by Google

I have said, becomes second nature when there is a woman on board, 'Fred, I've made an infernal fool of meself. They've let me in at the office.'

"'Why,' I said, 'I thought they did you rather well, giving you permission to take Mrs. Evans *and* the youngster. You know how they wired Tompkins once: "*No children*"?'

"'You don't know nothing about it,' says Jack, who was invariably hard on English when he was moved. 'It's a case of wheels within wheels. They only did that to get this gel out for nothing. She's going out to her father in the Grecian Arches, and some clever fool in the office thought of sending her down to Mrs. Evans to see if she'd do to look after the kid.'

"'Well, it's only her grub for a fortnight or so,' I remarked.

"Jack looked solemnly at me and shook his head.

"'Have you seen her?'

"'No,' I said, 'Mr. Bloom told me she was a nice little piece of goods.' Jack snorted.

"'He's down in the cabin now talking about what's on at the theatres. Fred, I'm in for trouble, and you'll have to stand by me.'

"And he was, for you must bear in mind that there were others on board besides Mr. Bloom. There was the Second Mate, a young man whose prospects

Digitized by Google

were tarnished by a weakness for secret drinking. And there was young Siddons, a stripling just out of his apprenticeship and uncertificated, the son of a well-to-do merchant in a country town. Jack used to say there was too much of the lah-di-dah about him, and was down on him time and again. All the same he liked the boy, as I did, too, for Siddons was a gentleman—the only one on board, I used to think. He got the D. S. O. the other day for bombing something or other in Germany. He was what modern, educated smart women call 'a charming boy' or 'a pretty little boy.' Not that he was effeminate, by any means. He was simply one of those to whom virtuous sentiment is a passionate necessity. Instead of playing in the gutters of life, as so many of us do, his young body and soul were on tip-toe for the coming of love. You can see it when they are like that. There is a thirsty look about the lips, a turn for moodiness, a sudden dilation of the pupils as they catch your glance, and a quick flush, very pretty to see. And sometimes, I am informed, they find a woman worthy of the gifts they bear. . . .

"We had a couple of engineers, too, but they were scarcely to be classed with young Siddons. They were like a good many of us, useful, shop-soiled articles with plenty of the meretricious conventional sexuality which passes for passion when stimulated.

Digitized by Google

But neither of them would have got a look from a modern, educated smart woman. The Third I didn't know very much about. He came and went, and the principal impression I have of him now is that he was married. The Second had what I should call an oppressively incondite mind. He had a cold avidity for facts. Unlike most seamen he never read fiction unless it was some book which had achieved notoriety for what is called frankness. He had a bookshelf in his cabin containing his shore-going boots and a derby hat, a Whittaker's Almanac, a Who's Who, several year-books, and a shilling encylopedia. It was astonishing, the comfort he seemed to derive from knowing the census-returns of Bolivia, or the Republican majority in Oregon, or the number of microbes in a pint of milk. But it did no one any harm. I only mention it because he, too, in his way, fell in love with Artemisia and for a time neglected his familiar preoccupations.

"For that is what it amounted to—that we all fell in love. Each of us had to measure ourselves by this standard. At certain times in our lives we all have to drop what we are doing and submit ourselves to the test. I'm afraid most of us don't cut a very brilliant figure. It is fortunate for us that one can achieve success in a lower class, and can pass muster as human beings because we are honest or sober or

Digitized by Google

clever, and not simply because we are worthy of love. All the same, I fancy the contempt which some of us pour upon the lucky ones is born of envy. We wish to be like them in our heart of hearts. I used to have the most preposterous dreams of being the lover of some proud, beautiful girl I had read about or seen in the street.

"Artemisia was like that. She was one of those beings who inspire love, who are the living embodiments of that tender philosophy which makes every adjustment of our lives by sentiment alone, and who convince us, by a gesture, a glance, a timbre in their voices, that our lightest fancy is a grave resolution of the soul.

"It would be easy, of course, to jeer at a crowd of simple, half-educated shell-backs losing their hearts to a lady-passenger's maid, but that would not be a fair account of it. We were not simple in that sense. My experience is that contact with the great elemental realities does not breed simplicity so much as a sort of cunning. We live deprived of so many of the amenities of culture and wealth that we cannot credit our good fortune when anything really fine comes in our way. We are not to be had. We are cautious. These good things are for shore people. And we get into the habit of good-humoured humility, discounting ourselves and our shipmates

Digitized by Google

beyond recall. We say, 'only fools and drunkards go to sea,' and that indicates pretty accurately the value we place upon our hopes and aspirations.

"And so you must not expect me to give you vivid accounts of passionate declarations of love under the Mediterranean moon, or of desperate knife-work in the dark with Artemisia bending over the dying man and kissing his death-dewed forehead in a last farewell. The voyage went on much as usual outwardly. The days are gone, if they ever existed, when love ruled the camp or the quarter deck. Yet there was a subtle change. Men went about their various tasks with an air of charged expectancy. Now and again a couple could be seen talking earnestly together. The weather, until we passed Gibraltar, was against any dramatic developments. Mrs. Evans and Angelina kept below. Only once, at dusk, while we were passing the Burlings, off Portugal, I looked over the rail of the bridge-deck and saw young Siddons leaning on the bulwarks below, his head turned toward someone I could not see. He was laughing as happily as a child. Leaning over a little further I saw a girl's finely articulated hand and a corner of a white apron.

"But most of us had no chance. It sounds a strange thing to say, but it was almost as if Mrs. Evans herself regarded me as married to her. As

Digitized by Google

though because I had been the means of their meeting, I was entitled to a sort of founder's share in Angelina! I was in the way to becoming an expert in infant's complaints. And Jack seemed to think that when I came into the cabin to talk, he had the right of going off duty, so to speak, and would go up to the chart room to have a smoke. No, I didn't go simply to catch a glimpse of Artemisia, though she was worth glimpsing. I went from a sense of social duty. I felt I owed it to Jack to be sociable with his wife. And perhaps, too, there was an idea at the back of my head that contact with Mrs. Evans was a corrective to any tendency I might have to make a fool of myself over any young woman. That was Mrs. Evans' specialty, you might say. She didn't mean it, but unconsciously she shrivelled at the least breath of desire. I used to watch apprehensively for the blank look in the eyes, the tightening of the lips, the infinitesimal drawing back of the head, as of a snake about to strike. There was something sharply astringent about her then, like biting inadvertently into a green banana. And yet she had her gusts of enthusiasm over 'darling Babs.' The child was a monster of egoism, as may be imagined. She was very like her father physically—full-blooded, plump, bold-eyed, and with a perfectly devilish temper. Without warning she would explode,

Digitized by Google

scream, scratch, bite, and kick, until she got what she wanted, when she would subside as suddenly into a self-centred silence broken by hiccoughs and chokes. She wanted everything—the watch and money out of your pocket and heart and liver out of your body. 'Angel child!' her mother would call her, and hang fondly over the odious little brat. For the angel child was still supposed to be 'delicate.' Mrs. Evans had a case of champagne and a stock of Bovril, and I dare say some of the displays I witnessed were due in part to intoxication. The carpenter was busy all day making gates and fences round the companion and bridge deck to prevent the delicate child from crawling out and getting slung overboard. I used to sit in the cabin with the angelic Babs on my knee, from which she was always slipping, listening to Mrs. Evans' account of the diphtheria, and watching Artemisia moving noiselessly to and fro in the bedroom or sitting just inside the spare stateroom door sewing. I never enjoyed looking at a girl so much in my life. She was not pretty in the ordinary sense of the word. Her skin was not the buttery yellow you associate with half-breeds. It was more the russet brown of a sun-burned blonde. Her cheeks had a soft peachy glow under the brown bloom that was beautiful. And yet she did not give one the impression of sheer innocence and youth

Digitized by Google

which was implied in her unique complexion. Her eyes were perfectly steady and unabashed, her figure was more mature and matronly than Mrs. Evans', and she had a gravity of poise and deliberate movement that one associates with the reflection born of experience. She gave me the impression, I may say, of a young person who had chanced upon some astounding revelation, and who was preoccupied with both past and future more than the immediate present. It made her more attractive than less, I think. She established a certain careless fondness for talking to Mr. Chief, as she called me. I dare say I was in love with her even then. She had a personality. I think Jack, who for all his crude psychology was a pretty shrewd judge of humanity, saw something beyond a mere desirable young girl in this nurse. He used to follow her round with his eyes as though he couldn't make her out. He couldn't recover from the shock of her name. He would sit in the saloon watching her with the child, and mutter 'Artemisia! Humph!' She would glance up from her occupation and regard him with steady, meditative eyes. I was fascinated by the name myself. It recalled Captain Macedoine to me. It was like him. Imagine that name reverberating down through the ages from ancient Attica to classical France, taken out across the Western Ocean by forlorn *émigrés*,

Digitized by Google

who clung to their pretty trashy artificialities in spite of, or perhaps because of, the frightfulness of the wilderness, handed on by sentimental and aristocratic Creoles, filched by German Jews and prosperous mulattos, picked up right in the gutter by a supreme illusionist and given to a young person who seemed half school-girl and half adventuress.

"For it was perfectly obvious to me that whether I had diagnosed her character truly or not, she was not at all a suitable temperament to have about a child. There was, for instance, something ominous in the sudden quiet with which she would regard the angelic Babs when that odious little being began to pull her hair or jump on her feet or thump her across the back with the heavy cabin ruler. These things happened to me, too; but I could scarcely expect to escape. I was Jack's chum. I was a bachelor and therefore credited with a deep and passionate love of children. Artemisia, however, was a stranger. When something particularly outrageous occurred, Mrs. Evans, glancing up, would murmur, 'Oh, Babs, dear!' and then, to my considerable embarrassment, I would find Artemisia's eyes fixed inscrutably upon mine as she fended off the attentions of her charge. And so, when I rose one fine evening as we sailed along the Spanish coast, and she followed me up on deck, I felt that she was about to take me into her

Digitized by Google

confidence. I looked round as she slammed the wicket which the carpenter had made to keep Babs from tumbling down and breaking her neck, and the girl's face was close to mine. We laughed quietly in the faint light that came up from the cabin. After all, there was not such a frightful disparity in our ages. As we walked aft along the bridge deck, and stood between the funnel casing and the life boats—a matter of seconds—I might have given a swerve to both our destinies. There are moments, you know, when one can spring over the most frightful chasms in one's journey through life, and land with both feet on mossy banks and enamelled meads. It was possibly such a moment, only I didn't take the chance. As I said, I prefer the part of super in the play—one sees so much more than either spectator or hero. And I think she saw, too, in the same flash of intelligence. And so, nothing happened. When she spoke she merely asked in a low tone what the punishment was for infanticide.

"'You know, Mr. Chief,' she went on, putting up her arms and swinging gently on the life-lines of the boats, 'It isn't fair. I'd never have taken it on if I'd known what I was in for. I have a devil of a temper. I'm sure I shall do something to that child.'

"'To keep it quiet?' I suggested. She nodded rapidly.

Digitized by Google

"'For good!' she replied, and added: 'They never used to let me have anything to do with the kids at school.'

"'Because of the temper?' She nodded again.

"'I nearly killed a girl once,' she remarked, calmly.

"'Oh, tut-tut!' I said, but she insisted, and her eyes gleamed with a sudden vixenish anger. 'Yes, Mr. Chief. She was a tall, fair girl with yellow hair and a lovely complexion, like an advertisement for soap. She hated me, and told the girls I would only be a nigger where she came from. Her father was in the Civil Service somewhere. And she kept on calling me nigger, and the other girls followed her lead until I was nearly *crazy*. And one night I went into the lavatory and put a piece of caustic soda into her sponge as it lay on the rack. And the next morning when she was washing there was a horrible row, and she ran up and down the bedroom screaming, and her face was all one smear of crimson and purple. She had to go to hospital and it took months to heal. The sponge was left in the water and there was nothing to show, but the girls knew I'd done it because I didn't run and see what was the matter. They didn't call me nigger any more, Mr. Chief.'

"I said I supposed not, and enquired if Mrs. Evans knew this story. Artemisia shrugged her

Digitized by Google

shoulders and showed the tip of her tongue. 'I wouldn't tell *her* much,' she replied.

"'And you are going out to see your father?' she nodded. 'He wants me to help him in his business.'

"'He's not a captain now, I suppose?' I asked her, to see how much she knew. She was unconcerned. 'No, he retired from the sea when I was a little girl. We came home from the States. We lived near Saxhambury then. Do you know it? Father was very unfortunate. He lost on some of his investments and had to go abroad again. He was in Egypt a long while.'

"'And you haven't seen him since when?' I hazarded.

"'Oh, I met him when he came to Paris on business. You see, the company he's in now is French, and he is in a very important position out there.'

"It was clear she knew nothing. She had been brought up upon the customary vague references to 'position,' and so on, with which young people in the middle classes are inducted into the real world. One could imagine her telling her school-chums how her father had 'an important position out there,' and their subsequent awe and envy. I can remember a boy at school saying his dad was 'on the Continent,' when his fond parent had gone for a week-end at Boulogne. We were impressed. And I wondered

Digitized by Google

what old Macedoine's job might happen to be. So I said that I had once been shipmates with a Captain Macedoine out in New Orleans. She exclaimed: 'Were you really! How funny!' and suddenly dropped her voice to a whisper. 'Were you friends, as you are with Captain Evans?' I said no, not exactly, and looked up at the figure of young Siddons on the bridge. He was looking at us, and paused in his walk to and fro trying to make out who I might be. I was thinking of him and wondering, when I heard her say that her father did not like America; he was never happy there. He was misunderstood. Well, many a man has been unhappy and misunderstood in America. Some men are so exacting in their ideals that no country can hope to win their approbation. Captain Macedoine was evidently still on a pilgrimage seeking a home for his wounded spirit. I asked his daughter if he were happy and understood in Ipsilon. She regarded me with attention for a moment, as though she suspected me of irony. Then she said, in the grave tones that middle-class people reserve for the vital themes of life, that he had a good position and excellent prospects. And then she left me with a murmur about 'the kid' and I began to walk to and fro. I was amused. I tried to figure out the salient features of a 'position' which would meet with the approval of a man with Macedoine's record.

Digitized by Google

And the prospects! For mind you, he must have experienced a severe blow when those Federal secret service men had ferreted out his dealings in the opium traffic and his plan for establishing himself in England had gone to smash. And in what way could this young person assist him in his business? I was intrigued, as they say, but I could form no theory which would adequately account for so many disparate premises. After all, such musings are their own reward. The event robs them of their early glamour. I did not even confide in any one else on the ship. There is a pleasure in an unshared scandal which many men and all women seem to overlook. It added, I may say, to the joys of being a super in the play. And when Mr. Basil Bloom, our effulgent chief mate, informed me one evening that I seemed to be very chummy with Miss Macedoine, I only smiled and asked him if he had designs on her himself. He twisted his moustache, looked scornfully at the horizon, and was evidently perturbed. He had referred grandiloquently, during the previous voyages, to a peerless female whom he called 'the future Mrs. Bloom.' This lady lived at Greenwich, and we had reason to believe that Mr. Bloom, on the strength of his genteel manners, formidable moustache, and optimistic temperament, had been sponging on her family for some months before he joined the

Digitized by Google

Manola. 'I'll tell the young lady,' I said, 'and perhaps you'll get some encouragement.' He assured me first that I needn't trouble, and then added that he knew I was the last person in the world to think less of a man if he changed his mind. This was so infernally unfair to the lady at Greenwich that I laughed in his face and walked away.

"The Second Mate took a different line. He was a quiet, inoffensive creature, and usually preoccupied with a feeble struggle which he maintained against whiskey. He had a delicately coloured, spiritual, refined face, with the salient points slightly sharpened, and he seemed to have neither thoughts, hopes, nor aspirations. However, his finely chiselled features appeared one day while we were in Alexandria with the addition of a greenish-yellow puff below the left eye, and the mess-room boy informed us that the Second Mate was having his meals in his room in future. There was a laugh from the Third Engineer, and I said nothing, for I had a notion he and the Second Mate had been ashore together. But the mess-room boy, whose slant eyes and long nose worried into all the scandal of the ship, added that young Mr. Siddons had blacked the Second Mate's eye for him, over the nurse. I told him to dry up. To tell the truth I was getting tired of the episode. I felt the whole thing was becoming

Digitized by Google

tawdry and dropping to a rather low plane. I wasn't willing to admit this to myself, mind you, because it involved my old friend Jack. I mean it would be the Commander's fault if we all slumped into the mire together over this young woman. That's what commanders are for—to raise the tone. That's what a good many of them lack the character to do. Personal courage, professional skill, long experience, will carry a man through among men. When there are women in the case, a man needs something else. What? Well, it may sound strange to you, but I should call it simplicity of heart. It is almost the only thing women instinctively respect and fear. Good old Jack was simple in his way, but I doubted his ability to handle a crisis. I was thankful when we were through with Alexandria and were heading north for Ipsilon.

"For just as we were entering this sea cluttered with islands so thick you can always see four or five and sometimes a dozen at once, so we were in the midst of a score of dubious possibilities. Here was Jack avoiding me in an apologetic fashion. Here was the Chief Mate whispering to Mrs. Evans. Here was the Second Mate sitting in remote and solitary grandeur in his little cubby-hole, comforting himself with a bottle of Turkish gin. Here was young Siddons, very youthful-looking and shy, miserable

Digitized by Google

because the Captain was looking black about something. Only the angel child and her mother seemed untouched by the horrible paralysis which was creeping upon us and for which they were primarily responsible. At all hours you could hear the roars of rage from the cabin when it wanted something—the roar, the squeals, the kicks, the hiccoughs, and the final sullen silence of satiety. I tell you, that woman and her baby were driving us all, including her husband, crazy, and she sat there oblivious. She wasn't even aware that Artemisia hated her.

"I don't know exactly what Jack had expected me to do to help him. No doubt if I had proposed to Artemisia during the voyage, married her in Alexandria, and left her ashore in a flat out at Mex or Gabbari he would have been satisfied. I should have got him out of a hole and got myself into one, which appeals to most of us. Or I might have acted like a man without any emotions at all, and repelled Artemisia's confidences with chilling disdain. This would have set a good example to the others, he may have thought. I have never gone in for setting a good example, however. I have found that even those who follow the example hate the man who sets it. And in addition, with the curious intuition of the illiterate, Jack suspected I had not been perfectly frank with him as to my intimacy with her. And so

Digitized by Google

we were all on the watch, alert, uneasy, silent, and unhappy.

"I still went in to see Mrs. Evans of an evening. To tell the truth she fascinated me. I had always held the theory that no married woman could be an absolute fool. It had seemed to me that such contact with the realities of life as marriage involved must leave some austere mark of intelligence, some tinge of altruism, upon the most superficial. She seemed to disprove this. For her the world did not exist save for the 'angel child.' Even her husband was now only the nearly indispensable producer of income. She talked, not of him, or of her family, not of Art or Life or Death or the world to come, not even of Home or the things she had seen in Alexandria. She had seen nothing in Alexandria. She had declined to let Jack take her to Cairo 'because of the expense.' She read no books nor papers. She dressed in perfect propriety. And all the time she talked about the child, one hand near the child, her eyes fixed on the child's movements or repose. I think the voyage was a revelation to Jack. He was finding his place in the world. He was thinking in his honest, clumsy way. He never took his wife for a trip again. He loved his child as much as any man could, but this ingrowing infatuation, to the exclusion of every other desirable thing in the world, was fatiguing.

Digitized by Google

"And Artemisia! She sat in her little spare cabin opening on the saloon, and now and again she would raise her shoulders, draw a deep breath, let them drop again as though in despair, and go on with her sewing. She would laugh at me when I tried to amuse the child and distract it from some preposterous desire. It was not easy. Her tenacity of purpose was appalling. She was yelling one evening for someone to open the great medicine chest that stood by the brass fireplace. I tried the time-honoured ruses for placating the young. I said there was a lion inside who would jump out and eat Babs. I pretended to go and find the key and came back with the news that naughty Mr. Siddons had dropped it into the sea. The brat stopped to breathe for a moment and a faintly human expression came over the stupendously smug little face. I followed this up by a story of how Mr. Siddons had shown me how to make a pin float on the water. I hastily poured some water into a glass, got a piece of blotting paper, laid my pin on it, and waited for the homely trick to succeed. I had no luck somehow. The pin went to the bottom and Babs' opinion of me went with it. She suddenly remembered about the medicine chest and gave a preliminary yell. Mrs. Evans said, 'Oh, Babbsy, darling!' I got up and went out on deck. We were running among the islands. Away to the east-

Digitized by Google

ward I could see the lights of the Roumania Lloyd mail-boat going south. Suddenly two hands grabbed the lappets of my patrol-coat, a dark, fluffy head leaned for a delicious moment against my chest, and Artemisia gurgled, 'Oh, Mister Chief, isn't she just a little fiend?' She had been listening to my blandishments and had witnessed the final destruction of my hopes. She put her hands behind her back, threw up her head, and regarded me with amusement. 'Why,' she whispered, 'why didn't you open the medicine chest, and give her the prussic-acid to play with?' And then, without waiting for an answer, she turned and looked across at the islands we were passing. She sighed. 'Just look at them! How do they know which is Ipsilon? Mister Chief, Mister Chief, I am afraid.'

"'What of?' I asked. She sighed again.

"'Of the future,' she said. 'This is a change for me. I don't know what's coming. I haven't had any luck yet.'

"I asked her in what way.

"'You know, Mister Chief, I have been in several situations. I was a typist. . . .' she shrugged her shoulders.

"'Your father will be here,' I suggested, but she paid no attention, merely looking at the dark blots on the sea that were islands. And then she remarked in

Digitized by Google

a perfectly level and unconcerned voice that sometimes she wished she was dead. I patted her on the shoulder.

"'Go to bed, my child,' I remarked, coldly, 'you'll feel better in the morning. You won't wish you were dead when Captain Macedoine comes aboard to fetch you.'

"She walked away in silence and went down to the cabin. I have often wondered if she had not intended to make some sort of confession. Perhaps it was a moment in her life when she became suddenly aware of her insecurity, of her lack of the kindly props and supports which hold most of us up and give us a good opinion of ourselves. For really she lacked everything. As I found out later, as she stood talking to me that evening and trying to find some easy yet adequate method of taking me into her confidence without losing my esteem, she lacked everything that most girls have. She was one of those tragic figures who even lack innocence without having gained any corresponding experience. And perhaps she felt for a moment the shadow of her destiny upon her, and seeing the dark path among the islands she was to tread, shrank back, doubtful even of the power of her father to carry her through."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III

MR. SPENLOVE, sitting forward in his deck chair, felt in his pocket for his cigarette-case and looked round satirically into the profound shadow of the awning. He still preserved the appearance of a man talking to himself, but the fancy crossed his mind, as he glanced at the long horizontal forms in the deck chairs, that he was addressing a company of laid-out corpses. The air was very still, but a light breeze on the open water beyond the nets, and the full splendour of a circular moon, reminded him of an immense sheet of hammered silver. But Mr. Spenlove did not look long at the Ægean. He swivelled round a little and pointed with the burnt-out match at the large plain building he had indicated at the beginning of his story. It was not a beautiful building. It had the rectangular austerity of a continental customs house or English provincial "Athenæum." It was built close to the cliff and the outer wall was provided with a flight of stairs which ascended, in a mysterious and disconcerting manner, to the second floor. All

Digitized by Google

this was clearly visible in the brilliant moonlight, and even the long valley behind, with its dim vineyards and clumps of almond, olive, and fig trees half concealing the square white houses that dotted the perspective, were subtly indicated against the enormous background of the tunnelled uplands and bare limestone peaks. Mr. Spenlove held the match out for a moment and then flicked it away.

"Romantic, isn't it? This was how it looked the night we anchored, and Artemisia came up to me as I stood by the engine-room skylights with my binoculars. It was she who pointed out to me how romantic it was. I asked her why. I said: 'This place is simply an iron mine. To-morrow they'll put us under those tips you see sticking out of the cliff there and a lot of frowsy Greeks will run little wooden trucks full of red dust and boulders and empty them with a crash into the ship. And there'll be red dust in the tea and the soup and in your hair and eyes and nose and mouth. And there'll be nothing but trouble all the time. Very romantic!' So I sneered, but she wasn't taken in by it a bit. She looked through the glasses, and laughed. 'Oh, it's beautiful!' she murmured, 'beautiful, beautiful.'

"I said, 'How do beautiful things make you feel?' and she turned on me for a moment. 'You know,'

Digitized by Google

she said, and was silent. And I did know. It was the bond between us. We had become aware of it unconsciously. It had nothing to do with our age or our sex or our position in life. It was the common ground of our intense anger with the other people on the ship. Do you know, I have often thought that Circe has been misjudged. Men become swinish before women who are unconscious of their unlovely transformation. Circe should be painted with her eyes fixed in severe meditation, oblivious of the grunting, squeaking beasts around her. Artemisia was like that. She really cared nothing for the ridiculous performances of the various animals on the ship. Nothing for the magniloquent Mr. Basil Bloom, clearing his throat behind his dirty hand; nothing for the Second Mate, with his perpetual expression of knowing something about her and being mightily amused by it. Nothing even for poor young Siddons, badly hit, moping out of sight, heaving prodigious sighs and getting wiggings for being absent-minded. As for the Second and Third, my particular henchmen, she didn't know they existed. Honourable! Why of course, they were all honourable in their intentions. Didn't Mr. Bloom express his willingness to throw over the young lady at Greenwich, although he owed her father fifty pounds? Didn't the Second Engineer drop a note down her

Digitized by Google

ventilator saying he had a hundred in the Savings Bank and she had only to say the word? (And didn't Mrs. Evans pick it up and take it, speechless with annoyance, to Jack, who roared with laughter?) Honourable? Of course they all wanted to marry her. Swine are domestic animals."

The Surgeon, who had caused this digression, made a vague murmur of protest. Mr. Spenlove drummed on the chair between his legs and shrugged his shoulders, but he didn't turn round.

"I didn't offer to tell you a love-story. Captain Macedoine's daughter, if she means anything, means just this: that love means nothing. She passed through all the dirty little gum-shoe emotions which she inspired on the *Manola* like a moonbeam through a foul alley. For it is foul, this eternal preoccupation with sex, like a lot of flies over a stagnant, fecundating pool. Beauty! You all talk largely of appreciating beauty, and you don't know, the most educated and cultured of you, the first thing about it. Your idea of beauty is a healthy young female without too many clothes. I tell you, I have seen ships so perfect and just in modelling that I have marvelled at the handiwork of my fellowmen. I have seen cities at sunrise so beautiful I have gone down to my room and shed tears of ridiculous sorrow. And I have seen the patrons of female beauty, too, coming back

Digitized by Google

from the cities to the ships with dry palates, and their neckties under their ears. . . .

"Well! We stood there, and to ease the pressure of the moment she put up the binoculars and swept the little beach, finally coming to rest at the big house—Grünbaum's house. While we had been talking a light had come out on the balcony, and figures began to move about with the precise and enigmatic motions of marionettes. Without glasses I could see Grünbaum seated at a table with a big lamp over his head. Another figure moved to the open side and stood still. I was wondering what this portended when Grünbaum half rose and waved his arms, and the other figure turned and dwindled rapidly into obscurity, suddenly coming into the light again at the other side of the table. And Artemisia said quietly, 'There's father!' and handed me the binoculars.

"To say that I was interested would not put the matter in its true light. I was more than that. There was a fantastic quality in the whole business which was almost supernatural. It is strange enough to meet a person after many years; stranger still to meet one who has made a powerful yet unsympathetic impression upon you—to meet him with all your old dislikes and prejudices washed to a clear and colourless curiosity. But to see such a man as I saw

Digitized by Google

Captain Macedoine, afar off, through an atmosphere charged with the electric blue radiance of moonlight, moving in an alien orbit, animated by unknown emotions—why, it was like seeing a man who was dead and gone to another world! I raised the glasses and focussed them. Captain Macedoine stood leaning heavily on his hands as they grasped the edge of the table, and he was staring straight out at me. Of course he could see nothing beyond the balcony, but the impression was exactly that of a man striving to win back across the gulf to his former existence. And his strained immobility was accentuated by the figure of Grünbaum with his jerkily moving arms, his polished forehead gleaming in the lamplight, the gyrations of his chin as he turned every moment or so and looked up sideways at the other. Grünbaum flourished papers, reaching out and rearranging them, throwing himself back in his chair and beating the table with a folded document to emphasize his words. And every now and again the whole scene grew dim as though it were a phantasmagoria, and about to dissolve, when the smoke from Grünbaum's cigar floated and hung in the still air.

"And I discovered, too, that I had no words in which to formulate the peculiar impressions this scene made upon me. I could find no adequate remark! The girl at my side, reaching out absently

Digitized by Google

for the glasses, made no sign that this scene going on half a mile away was at all strange to her. For all one could gather, Captain Macedoine's daughter was accustomed to see her father submitting passively to the onslaughts of foreign concessionaires every day in the week. I gazed at her as she stood there by the awning-stanchion looking at her magnificent parent, and it was suddenly borne in upon me that it is a miracle we ever learn anything about each other at all in this world. There is nothing so inscrutable as an ordinary human being, I am convinced, and I have been watching them for thirty years. What we know and can tell, even the acutest of us, is no more than the postmark on a letter. What's inside—ah, if we only knew. What? Absurd? By no means. I believe married people do occasionally accomplish it in a small way. I mean I believe they attain to a fairly complete comprehension of each other's souls. But as to whether the game is worth the candle they never divulge. . . .

"Certainly Artemisia did not at that moment. She left me, as every woman I have ever met has left me, groping. She sighed softly and returned the glasses, remarking again, 'Yes, there's Father,' and bade me good-night without a word of explanation. Mind, I don't say I had any right to such a word. I don't even feel sure she understood any-

Digitized by Google

thing at all about her father's position on that island. The bare fact remains that I expected some explanation simply because I credited her with a character light yet strong, and capable of supporting the weight of her father's confidence.

"For observe; if this girl was ignorant of everything, if she came out here a mere child agape with curiosity, then Macedoine must have been that extremely rare phenomenon, a completely lonely man. And I was not prepared to admit the possibility of such an existence for him. He was one of those men who can live, no doubt, without friendship, but who must have their audience. So much at least I knew of him in the old days in the Maracaibo Line, when he would sit near us in Fabacher's on Royal Street, ostentatiously reading a month-old copy of the London *Financial News*. It was this incessant urge to inspire wonder which led him to hint, indirectly, that he had been at school at the Charterhouse. Risky? Of course it was risky; and I should never have plumbed the mystery but for a most unimpressionable London purser who informed me there was a ragged school for slum children in the Charterhouse district in the city. Not that it mattered. We were not Macedoine's game. It was the bishops and colonels and eminent surgeons who made the round trip of the West Indies with us

Digitized by Google

whom he wished to impress. Whether he was a fraud or not, he certainly had acquired a way of ignoring common people such as we who go to sea. I knew he would regard good old Jack from such a lofty pinnacle that Jack would appear to him no more than one of the Greek labourers who shoved the little wooden cars along and tumbled their contents into the ship with a terrific clang of ironstone on iron, and clouds of red dust. I followed up this digression in my mind and arrived at the fascinating conclusion that if my recollection served me sufficiently well, he would not recognize me. He never had recognized me. I once had the pleasure of telling him that if his men didn't keep my room clean and tidy I would knock his head off. He never looked up from his desk until my grip on his collar tightened and his body began to rock to and fro. He complained to the Commander, who had been told of the incident by the Chief. 'Is this the engineer who assaulted you, Mr. Macedoine?' says the Captain. Macedoine examined me with a distant, preoccupied air, pressing his lips together and his eyebrows raised. He shrugged his shoulders, opened his lips with a slight smacking noise, and after quite a pause, a most imposing pause, he said he 'really couldn't say; these workmen were all so much alike when they were dirty. . . .' Old Pomeroy—he

Digitized by Google

was the first decent skipper the Maracaibo Line ever had—swung round on his chief steward and retorted: 'Then what the devil are you wasting all our time for?' He swung back to his desk again, muttering and slapping papers here and there. 'Preposterous —doesn't know who assaulted him. . . . Never heard. . . .' I was standing as stiff as a stanchion waiting for the Old Man to say I could go, when he saw Macedoine pussy-footing it to the door. 'Oh, and Macedoine,' called the Old Man. Macedoine stopped but did not look round. 'I expect the engineers on my ship to be referred to *as* engineers, not "workmen."' Silence, Macedoine looking at the back of his hand and smiling with the corner of his mouth pulled down. '*Understand!*' thundered the Old Man, rising from his chair but holding it by the arms. It was so sudden I nearly collapsed. I thought he was going to throw Macedoine through the door. That lofty personage was startled, too. He replied hastily: 'Oh, quite so, Captain, er. . . .' when old Pomeroy sat down and dipping his pen in the ink, shut him up with 'Then don't forget it, and don't wait.'

"I mention this highly unusual episode for a special reason. It happened to provide one specific proof of my theory that Macedoine was an artist in his method of building up that grotesque effigy which

Digitized by Google

he presented to the world as himself. He was like that eccentric rich person who once built a most astonishing house in Chelsea many years ago. You remember? It was called So-and-So's Folly. It stood on a valuable site, and each story was decorated in a different style. The basement was Phœnician and the roof was pure Berlin. But the horrible thing about that house was, not its bizarre commingling of periods, its terracotta tigers and cast-iron chrysanthemums, but the fact that inside it was a hollow, spider-haunted shell. There was not even a back to it. There were no floors laid on the joists, weathered planks blocked up the back, and a few forlorn green statues stood amid a dank jungle of creepers and grass and rubbish. Now that was how Macedoine impressed me, and what I was going to say was that by accident I obtained later a peep into his studio, so to speak, and saw his method of putting up that marvellous front, behind which, as you have already learned, there was nothing save the dreamy dirtiness of avarice and ego-mania. No, the solitary and grandiose idea in his mind precluded all recollection of individual humanity. It was not that he forgot us who had been his shipmates. He had never known us. We had not the wit to be knaves, or the credulity to accept him at his own colossal valuation. We ignored his enigmatic claim to greatness, while

Digitized by Google

he passed sublimely along, disdainful of our obvious virtues. For it is presumable that we *had* virtues, since the world—anxious for the replenishing of its larders—hails us nowadays as heroes because we prefer the dangers of sea-life to the tedious boredom of a shore-going existence. . . .

"Yes, I saw into his studio, watched the artist at work at first hand. I might claim the honour, indeed, of being one of the lumps of clay upon which he sought to model his design. Surely an authentic witness this; and I dare say the normal artist's material—since we are fond of saying he blows the breath of life into it—might not join in the universal praise bestowed upon its creator, but might indulge in ironic contemplation of its own birth-pangs and the strange fortunes of its pre-natal existence!

"He did not appear, however, as my stimulated imagination had pictured him appearing, to dominate the situation on the *Manola* and preoccupy us all with his personality and hypothetical power. Like a higher power, he remained invisible, and Captain Evans, going ashore in a boat with Artemisia and her belongings around him, was the first to encounter him in Grünbaum's office. Encountered him, and came back bursting with the most astonishing tidings. I was sitting in my room that evening after tea, having a quiet pipe and a book, when Jack came down.

Digitized by Google

"'Come along to my room, Fred,' he said, blowing clouds from his cigar. 'I want to talk to you.'

"'Why not here?' I suggested.

"'No, I want the wife to hear it, too. The gel's gone and the kid's asleep. Come along.'

"And highly mystified, I went along. It seemed like scandal, and I am not above such things once in a way, as you know. I went along, and found Mrs. Evans in her husband's cabin sewing. Nothing would do but I must have a cigar, and the angel child having been dosed with what her mother called 'chempeen', I had to have a glass of that, too. Jack was flushed and excited, and sat down beside me on the red plush settee.

"'What do you say,' he began, in a low, husky tone, 'to a job ashore, Fred?'

"So that was it. The age-old chimera of a 'job ashore.' I looked at Mrs. Evans. Her lips were shut to a thin line. I could see protest and dissent in every line of her body.

"'For you or for me?' I enquired, softly.

"'For me, and p'raps for you, too, if you play your cards. It's like this': and he began a long and complicated explanation. The gel's father, as he called Macedoine, had got the job of secretary to the company and somehow didn't hit it off with old Grün-baum, who was resident concessionaire. Of course I

Digitized by Google

knew Grünbaum's father, who had been the original prospector when the island was Turkish, sold most of his holdings to the French company, but kept a tenth which descended to his son who had succeeded him in the concession. Well, Grünbaum wouldn't hear of a lot of improvements which Macedoine wanted to introduce. The gel's father was full of modern ideas. Wanted to put in electric traction for the mines, with electric elevators and tips, and so on. He also wanted to develop the place, and had a plan for irrigation to attract settlers. Grünbaum wouldn't hear of it. Very conservative Grünbaum was. Got his tenth of the three francs per ton on the ore, and a thousand a year as manager, and was satisfied. Didn't want settlers. He was king of the island and he and Macedoine had had a row. Macedoine was sick of it. All this had been explained to Jack by a young Greek, a clerk in the office, who was sick of it, too, and was 'going in' with Macedoine in his new venture. And what was that? Well, it was this way: Macedoine, who had knocked about a bit, had taken an option on some sites in Saloniki, he had bought a sixty-fourth share in the Turkish steamboat which carried the mails to the islands, and he was going into the development of Saloniki. Had formed a small preliminary company, registered in Athens, to take up the options, and he wanted direc-

Digitized by Google

tors. This young Greek, Nikitos, was to be secretary, knowing the languages, you see. He wanted directors, practical men to superintend the actual business while he, Macedoine, you understand, would be free to control the financial side of the affair. Oh, it was a big thing. There was to be a big hotel, a big brewery, a big shipping business, a big real estate development in Macedonia, a big railroad system, and a big fleet of ships to carry away the freight which comes from all this. Everything was to be big, big! Jack blew clouds of smoke, big clouds, and flourished his fat hands in the air. 'What did I think? Wasn't it worth jumping at? Five founder's shares of a thousand drachmas each in the preliminary company, convertible into preferred stock in the big concern and ten thousand drachmas a year salary. Eh? What did I think? Wasn't it a sound investment? What about it?' And Jack bored into my ribs with his powerful finger.

"I looked at Mrs. Evans. It was evident she had already heard something of this magnificent scheme for making us all millionaires, and her verdict was evident enough also. She never raised her eyes from her sewing where she sat in a cane chair, her hair smooth and shining, her dress smooth and shining, too, the embodiment of prim respectability and prudence. She had often inspired me with a crazy

Digitized by Google

ambition to see her being chased by a lunatic with a razor in his hand, or pursued by a hungry Bengal tiger—to see her in some predicament which would crack the shell of middle-class reserve in which she was secreted and show me the live, scampering human being within: but just now I was appalled by the formidable aspect of her disapproval. Even Jack was aware of it, for he watched me to see what I would say. And what could I say? What could any sane human being, with a knowledge of the world, say? I didn't say anything. I scratched my chin and pretended to be thinking deeply.

"For without claiming any especial perspicuity, I must confess that I have never been the raw material out of which 'suckers' are manufactured. It has always seemed to me pertinent to enquire, when Golcondas and Eldorados are offered for a song, why the vendor should be so anxious to hypothecate his priceless privileges. I suppose I am a skeptic. Business, after all, is very much like Religion: it is founded on Faith. And men like my friend Jack, for instance, have great faith in the written word, much more in the beautifully engraved word. For them all the elaborate bunkum by which the financial spell-binder conceals his sinister intentions is of no avail; the jargon of the prospectus, the glittering generalties, the superb optimism, the assumption of austere

Digitized by Google

rectitude, the galaxy of distinguished patrons who for a consideration lend their names to the venture. For it is a venture, and men have always a pathetic hope that it may become an adventure as well, and that their ship will come labouring home, loaded with gold.

"Women, especially married women, are not at all like that, but they are not so much skeptics as infidels. They start up at the first distant approach of the financier, every plume and pin-feather quivering. They don't believe a word of it. They go down on their knees to their husbands and beg and beseech and supplicate them to have nothing to do with it. They shed tears over their children. They write long letters of distracted eloquence to their mothers. The very extremity of their impotence lends a certain tragic dignity to their tantrums. Of course if the cruel domestic tyrant persists in casting his bread upon the waters and speculation turns out to be a huge success, these Cassandras spend the dividends with a sort of stern joy, as though the money were tainted and they must exchange it for something useless and inconvenient as soon as possible. They know, by instinct, I suppose, that a chiffonier or a Chippendale bedroom suite is not legal tender for stock. They feel they've *got* something. It is a truism, I suppose, to say that women are implacable realists.

Digitized by Google

"Mrs. Evans was. And she knew, too, that I was of her opinion in this matter. She never raised her eyes to look at me; but she knew. Her lips never relaxed from the rigid line they had assumed when I came down, as though she was still waiting, in severe patience, for me to do my obvious duty, and corroborate her opinion.

"'What is he putting into it?' I asked, casually.

"'He's the vendor,' retorted Jack, who had picked up the vernacular pretty quickly. 'He turns over his options and his share in this mail-boat for ten founder's shares and a seat on the board, see? Then, when the big company's formed, he takes up shares in that, and is voted a salary of twenty thousand drachmas a year as financial adviser. That's how Nikitos put it to me. Nikitos knows the country and he says there's any amount of capital available once the thing gets started. These tobacco growers don't know what to do with their money—keep it in those big Turkish trousers, most of it, he reckons. The great thing is to get in at the beginning. What do you say? He wants a shipmaster and he wants a man with engineering experience to overlook the shipping business. I told Nikitos I'd talk it over with you. He says the skipper of that Swedish ship that's on the same charter as us is putting three hundred into it—seven thousand five hundred drachmas.'

Digitized by Google

"'But what did Macedoine say?' I persisted.

"Oh, I didn't see *him*,' admitted Jack, looking at the floor between his fat knees. 'Nikitos promised to arrange an interview if we decided to come in.'

"There it was, you see, the touch of the Master. I could not help a silent tribute of admiration to Captain Macedoine for this remarkable reserve, this exquisite demonstration of psychological insight. A man of great affairs! A financial magnate, graciously extending to us the privilege of participating in his immense schemes. 'An interview could be arranged!' It was superb, this method of mesmerizing all the simple-minded skippers and chiefs who came in the iron-ore ships to Ipsilon. I had a brief but vivid vision of us all ashore in Saloniki squabbling and bluffing each other, while Macedoine sat enthroned, apart, the financial adviser, dwelling in oriental magnificence upon our contributions.

"'What do you think, Mrs. Evans?' I asked, taking the bull by the horns. 'Shall we gamble a hundred or so and get rich quick?'

"'You're not married,' she replied, without looking up. 'You can spare it I dare say. It is different for Jack. He hasn't any money to throw away.'

"'Well,' I said, 'I haven't any to throw away, either, I can assure you. I wouldn't go to sea if I

Digitized by Google

had. But Jack thinks this is a great opportunity to invest his money where he can look after it. You see, he'll be drawing a salary as well when he's ashore in Saloniki.'

"Still she didn't look up. She had not budged an inch from her conviction that I agreed with her.

"'I couldn't think of living abroad,' she said, severely. 'I have Babs to consider.'

"I'm afraid Jack hadn't thought of that. He hadn't visualized his wife and baby dwelling in a Turkish town, cut off by thousands of miles of ocean from home. He had been so preoccupied with the divine prospect of 'a job ashore' that he had forgotten the environment. And we had been to Saloniki with coal, time and again. I can't say I blamed her. Residence in southeastern Europe has its drawbacks for a housewife. And quite apart from a natural repugnance to dirt, Mrs. Evans had an unnatural repugnance to anything foreign. She never really left England. She took it with her. She carried with her into her husband's cabin, and along the wild oriental foliage and architecture of Alexandrian streets, the prim and narrow ideals of her native valley. It never occurred to her that those people in turbans and fezzes were human. It never occurred to her when a French or Italian girl passed, dressed with the dainty and charming smartness of

Digitized by Google

her race, that she might possibly be virtuous as well. She shrivelled at their very proximity, drawing the angelic Babs from their contamination. She was uneasy, and would continue to be uneasy, until she was safe at home once more in Threxford, England. That was the burden of her unuttered longing: to get home, to get home, back to the little semi-detached red-brick villa on the Portsmouth Road, which her father had given her for a wedding present and which fifty Macedoines would never induce her to sell.

"For that is what it would mean if Jack invested even two hundred pounds in this wonderful enterprise to develop Macedonia. He had spent several hundred in furnishing the house, and since then most of his two hundred a year had gone in expenses, for he was no niggard either with himself or those he loved. Neither wife nor chick of his should ever lack for anything, he had told me proudly. If a neighbour's child got some expensive and useless contraption to pull about, Babs had one, too, the very next week. If a neighbour's wife got a fur coat, Mrs. Evans had orders to go and do likewise, a more expensive one if possible. What little he had was on deposit in the bank in his wife's name, so that she could draw on it while he was away.

"And so I came round to the unpleasant convic-

Digitized by Google

tion that while Mrs. Evans was silently awaiting my repudiation of the whole thing, her husband was expecting me to use my eloquence to persuade his wife to let him invest. They say a bachelor has no worries of his own. Which is as well, when his married friends endeavour to make him responsible for their own follies, and use him as a cushion to soften the family collisions. I was an old hand and slipped out. And I really was not thinking so much of my own two hundred pounds salted down in Home Rails, as of Jack's home, when I said, cheerfully:

"'Well, this Captain Macedoine can't object to giving us a little more information. And he can't expect us to have the cash with us. We shall have to go home and sell something and—er—draw the money, eh?'

"'It is quite out of the question,' said Mrs. Evans, biting her thread as though she was severing the spinal chord of the whole proposition.

"'So what I suggest is, Jack will see Captain Macedoine and we'll take the voyage home to think about it.' And I looked at Mrs. Evans to approve my machiavellian astuteness.

"'Oh, it's quite impossible, quite. I couldn't think of leaving England. And we couldn't spare the money.'

Digitized by Google

"'We shouldn't need the house if we came out here,' said Jack, looking solemnly at his wife. She stiffened.

"'We *can't* sell the house,' she muttered through her teeth. 'Where should we live? I've told you, Jack, it's quite impossible.'

"'The house 'ud fetch three hundred and fifty,' said Jack, looking at me with round solemn eyes, 'and the furniture 'ud fetch two hundred more. And there's —how much is there in the bank, Madeline? Say sixty odd. Six hundred pounds. You can live cheap in a place like Saloniki.'

"I could see Mrs. Evans was going to pieces. She went dull red and then dull white, dropped a stitch or so, moved her feet, took a deep breath through her nostrils. I was seeing the human being at last. The lunatic with the razor was after her. The Bengal tiger was growling near by.

"'Don't be in such a hurry,' I said, sharply, and for the first time that woman gave me a glance that might be tortured into a faint semblance of gratitude. 'I am not going into a thing until I've studied it, and nobody but a madman would commit himself on anybody's mere say-so. You see Macedoine, Jack, when you go ashore.'

"'You'd better come, too,' he said, rather glumly. 'Old Grünbaum wants some coal if you can spare it.

Digitized by Google

Forty ton, he said. It'll be a fiver for you. Can you let him have it and get to Algiers?'

"'I'll see,' I said. 'I'll go through the bunkers in the morning.' And we left the dangerous subject for the time being. It was positively refreshing to get out of the heavy atmosphere charged with Macedoine's grandiose schemes and Mrs. Evans' premonitions of disaster and beggary for herself and Babs. That angel child slept through it all on the far end of the big plush settee, fenced in with a teak bunk-board, one predatory hand clutching the throat of an enormous teddy bear whose eyes stared upward with the protruding fixity of strangulation, as though even in sleep she found it necessary to cause someone or something acute discomfort. Yes, it was refreshing, for I don't mind admitting that the petty graft of a five-pound note that I was to get from Grünbaum for selling him forty tons of coal was more to me than all the cloudy millions of Macedoine's imagination. I am as anxious as any one to get something for nothing, but this Anglo-Hellenic Development Company, in which I was to get four hundred a year for living in Saloniki, didn't appeal. In the regions of fancy Macedoine was an incomparable inspiration; in business I preferred the unimaginative concessionaire. As I rose to go up on deck, I felt that whether Mrs. Evans was grateful or not I

Digitized by Google

had earned her approbation. Perhaps she, with her feminine intuition—or possibly it was only the instinct of self-preservation—saw the necessity of flattering a poor silly single man, for she remarked, with her head bent over the child's to touch the tumbled locks:

"'I'm sure Mr. Spenlove will give you the *best* advice, dear.'

"And I felt my bosom swell with pride. Oh, women are wonderful! Even an inferior woman, as Mrs. Evans was, with a soul like a parched pea, and a heart so narrow that there was scarcely room in it for husband and child at the same time, a woman of meagre physique and frumpish in dress—even she could do a little in the animal-taming way—could crack a whip and make the lords of the jungle jump through paper hoops, and eat out of her hand. Oh, yes! Even she could harness us and drive us tandem through the narrow gate of her desire. She was sure I would give dear Jack the *best* advice. And in the glow of this benediction I departed.

"Mr. Bloom was on deck, moving softly to and fro, smoking an immense meerschaum carved to the likeness of a skull. It was a warm evening and he had discarded coat and vest, displaying a soiled starched shirt and black suspenders inadequately furnished with buttons. The doorway was in shadow

Digitized by Google

and for a moment I watched him, promenading in the moonlight. He had the air, as he stepped back and forth, of sharing his vigil with some invisible companion. At times he nodded, and waving his pipe toward the rail, might have been holding forth in unspoken words. Getting the best of the argument, of course, I reflected bitterly, and startled him by stepping out in front of him.

"'Good evening, Chief. Fine night for courtin', eh? A night like this reminds me o' the time when I was master. The moonlight, and the cliff, like the Morro. I was under the Cuban flag then you know, Chief. This brings it all back.' He waved his grisly meerschaum and added: 'Lovely place, Havana.'

"'Where's the Third Mate?' said Captain Evans, suddenly emerging from the dark doorway. 'He isn't in his cabin.'

"'He went ashore with the pilot in the cutter, Sir,' said Mr. Bloom. 'I did think of blowin' the whistle, only it occurred to me it might disturb the baby.'

"To this piece of extreme consideration Jack offered no reply. He walked along as far as the engine-hatch and then, putting his fingers in his mouth, blew a shrill blast that echoed and reëchoed between the cliffs. Men began to move about the ship, and a sailor appeared with a hurricane-lamp. A faint cry came out of the intense shadow of the

Digitized by Google

western shore and Jack answered it with a stentorian 'Cutter ahoy!' that boomed and reverberated over our heads and trailed away into a wild racket of distant laughter.

"'Don't shout so loud, man,' I suggested, when a cry once more came out of the shadow and we could see a faint glow as of a lantern in a boat moving toward us.

"'Just been havin' a little look round, I dessay,' remarked Mr. Bloom with a bland tolerance of youthful folly which I remember irritated me intolerably. Jack kept his gaze fixed on the slowly moving glow.

"'There's something wrong,' he remarked, soberly, ignoring Mr. Bloom at his elbow.

"'Oh, I don't think so, Captain. Only a . . .'

"'I tell you there's something wrong!' snarled Jack, turning on him suddenly. 'Stand by at the ladder there,' and the man with the hurricane-lamp said, quietly, 'Right, Sir.' Jack returned his gaze to the boat, which was approaching the edge of the shadow. How he knew, I don't pretend to explain. I take it he had a *flair*, as the French say, the sort of *flair* most of us acquire in our own profession and take for granted, but which always appears uncanny in another. And it was remarkable how the conviction that there *was* something wrong seized upon the ship and materialized in a line of shadowy figures

Digitized by Google

leaning on the bulwarks and projecting grotesquely illuminated faces into the light of the lamp on the gangway.

"'Mr. Siddons there?' called Jack, quietly, as the boat came into view in the moonlight. The man at the tiller sang out 'No, Sir,' as he put the rudder over and added, 'way 'nuff. Catch hold there!' and another figure stood up in the bows and laid hold of the grating.

"'Stand by,' said Jack coming down to the after deck. 'Come up here, you,' he added, addressing the man who had spoken. The man, one of the sailors, came up.

"'We were waitin' for Mr. Siddons, Sir, when you hailed.'

"'What orders did he leave?'

"'Said he was going up the beach a little way, Sir. Told us he wouldn't be long.'

"'Where did you land the pilot?'

"'At Mr. Grünbaum's jetty, Sir. It's the best for a big boat.'

"'Then where is he now?'

"'I couldn't say, Sir,' said the man. 'He went up the path with the pilot; that's all we know.'

"Jack took a turn along the deck.

"'P'raps I'd better go and 'unt him up,' suggested Mr. Bloom, stroking his moustache.

Digitized by Google

"'And leave me here with one mate and no pilot?' said Jack. 'Fred, you go.' He followed me into my room where I had a pocket-torch, and whispered, 'Go up yourself, Jack. See what I mean? He's a decent young feller, even if I do find fault. Don't let the men see anything.'

"'You don't think he's gone on the booze?' I said, incredulously.

"'I don't know what to think,' he retorted, irritably. 'I always thought he had plenty o' principle. You can't tell nowadays. But we don't want him to spoil himself at the beginning of his career. Understand what I mean?'

"As I sat in the stern of the cutter while the men pulled back into the shadow which was about to engulf the ship (for the moon was setting) I felt I liked Jack the better for that kindly whisper out of earshot of the estimable Mr. Bloom. It was like him. Now and again you could look into the depths of his character, where dwelt the old immemorial virtues of truth and charity and loyalty to his cloth. I even twisted round on the gunwale as I steered and looked back affectionately at his short, corpulent figure walking to and fro on the bridge deck, worrying himself about the 'young feller,' the embodiment of a rough yet exquisite altruism. It seemed to me a manifestation of love at least as worthy of admira-

Digitized by Google

tion as was his domestic fidelity. Oh, yes! You fellows call me a cynic, but I believe in love, nevertheless. It is only your intense preoccupation with one particular sort of love which evokes the cynicism and which inspires the monstrous egotism of women like Mrs. Evans.

"'Hard over, Sir,' said the leading seaman. 'Way 'nuff, boys!' I flashed my torch upon the tiny jetty which Grünbaum had made near his house, for he often went on fishing expeditions round the island, I had heard. Steps had been cut down from a path in the face of the cliff which led away up to some workings facing the sea, but which are out of sight. When I had climbed up the jetty I said:

"'Now you wait here while I go along to the house, and make enquiries. I don't suppose he's very far off.'

"I made my own way up the rough stones to the path, midway between the soft whisper of the waves and the frightful edge above my head and I felt a momentary vertigo. I was suspended in the depths of an impenetrable darkness. All things—the jetty, the boat, the path, were swallowed up. Even the ship was indicated only by the faint hurricane-lamp at the gangway and the reflection of the galley-fire against a bulkhead. Stone for building and for buttressing the mine-galleries had been quarried out

Digitized by Google

below, and the path was under-cut and littered about with the débris of an old ore-tip. I moved slowly toward Grünbaum's house, and as my eyes became accustomed to the darkness I saw another path, a more slanting stairway, on the face of the cliff. I paused. It was some hundred yards or so to where Grünbaum's house stood, as you see, at the foot of the slope. In the darkness Jack's words seemed to me to shed light. There was something wrong. But if something was wrong, if young Siddons had come to some harm, how had it happened? He must have had some motive in leaving a cutter with six men to wait for him. As for my idiotic suggestion that he might have gone on the booze, there wasn't a café within three miles that young Siddons would enter. He must have had some plan. Of course we are told, with wearisome insistence, to look for the woman; but we don't in real life. We look for all sorts of motives before we look for the woman. And even if I did in this instance suppose for a moment that Siddons had gone off on some mysterious adventure involving say, Captain Macedoine's daughter, I was no further advanced. He could hardly have told the sailors to wait. It was against all traditions of the service. And as I was deciding that he must have come to harm, and wondering how the deuce I was to discover him, a light shone out for

Digitized by Google

a moment above me, I saw a figure silhouetted in a doorway and then vanish. Someone had gone in. I started up the steep by-path to make enquiries. I knew the pilot, a predatory person from Samos, had a hutch on the mountain somewhere, and it occurred to me that he had negotiated the sale of a flask or two of the sweetish wine of the island, and young Siddons had seized the opportunity to get it aboard without the old man knowing it. Quite a rational theory, I thought, as I toiled up the path getting short of breath. And suddenly I came upon the door which had opened and closed, a door in a house like a square white flat-topped box, with a window in one side shedding a faint glow upon a garden of shrubs.

"And now I was in a quandary. I sat down on a bowlder to take a breath. Supposing I knocked at the door and asked if any one had seen the Third Mate, and the inhabitants had not seen him and couldn't understand me, I should have done no good. And supposing they had seen him, or that he was inside, I should have some difficulty in explaining my interest in his private affairs. For I liked him, and we are always afraid of those whom we like. It is not only that we fear to tarnish our own reputation in their eyes, but we suffer a mingled terror and pleasure lest we discover them to be unworthy of their exalted

Digitized by Google

position in our affections. So I got up and instead of knocking at the door I stepped among the shrubs and came to the window. And sitting close against the wall, with a small table in front of him and his head on his hand, sat Captain Macedoine.

"He was old. He showed, as we say, the ravages of time. And not of time only. Time alone could not furrow a human face into so many distorting folds and wrinkles. As I recalled the sleek, full-fed condition of his big smooth-shaven face when I had known him in the old days, I was revolted at the change. It was as though an evil spirit had been striving for years to leave him, and had failed. The cheeks were sunk into furrows of gray stubble and had sagged into sardonic ridges round the thin, wavering line of the mouth. The red eyelids blinked and twitched among the innumerable seams that ran back to the sparse, iron-gray hair. The nose, quite a noble and aquiline affair once, was red at the end, and querulous, like the long lean chin and reedy neck. Only the brow gave any hint that he might not be a casual loafer at a railroad station willing to carry your grip for a few pennies. High, narrow, and revealed remorselessly by the passing of the years, it was the brow of the supreme illusionist, the victim of an implacable and sinister spiritual destiny. I have said that when I saw him the

Digitized by Google

previous evening he had the look of a man trying to win back into the world. Now that I saw him more clearly, he looked as though he had come back, at some frightful cost, and regretted it.

"He was listening to someone I could not see at the moment, and raising his eyes with a regularly recurring movement that was almost mechanical. I shifted a little to take in another view of the small, shabbily furnished room. Standing by the end of a sofa, on which I could see a girl's feet and skirt, was a dark young man brushing his frock coat and talking with what struck me as absurd eloquence. He had never shaved; his face was obscured in a sort of brown fungus and was blotchy about the forehead and chin. His black eyes rolled as he talked and flourished the brush. He seemed to be describing something highly creditable to himself. This, I may tell you, was Monsieur Nikitos, visible in business hours as a clerk at Grünbaum's elbow, or in a bare barn of an outer office. He came over to the table, and sitting down near Captain Macedoine, opened an account book. This was evidently a *séance* of the Anglo-Hellenic Development Company, I thought, and I moved back to the path. I had no desire to spy upon any of these people, you understand. I had to find Siddons, and even the intriguing amusement of watching a great illusionist had to

Digitized by Google

recede before that urgent need. I regained the path below and thinking I would go down to the boat in case he had returned I started back. The torch showed me a steep descent of rubble where a cave-in had occurred, a gash in the edge of the path, I thought at first it was the way down to the jetty and I flashed the lamp steadily upon the bottom. There was someone lying down there. It was not long before I was kneeling over young Siddons.

"At first, you know, I really thought he was dead. He was lying face upward and his forehead had been gouged open above the left eye with some jagged edge and was bleeding in thick, slow runnels that disappeared into his curly hair. He lay perfectly motionless, but as I bent over him and searched the soft, delicate face in the first horror of grief, the eyes opened wide and blinked in a gaze of unconscious enquiry.

"'What is it, my boy?' I asked and after seeming to collect himself he asked, in perfect calmness:

"'Who is that?'

"'The Chief,' I answered. 'Did you fall?' He closed his eyes and made an effort to move. I put my arm around him. He said:

"'Chief, is the boat still there?' I told him it was.

"'Help me up. Be careful. I think my collar-

Digitized by Google

bone is broken again. Oh, Lord! Does—does the Old Man know?'

"'It was he sent me,' I said. 'He was afraid you had had an accident. Does that hurt?'

"'No—but catch hold of me lower down, will you?'

"'How did it happen? Did you slip?'

"'Oh, Lord! Yes—slipped, you know—look out!'

"'I thought you were dead,' I said jocularly, as we reached the path.

"And under his breath he made a remark that Captain Macedoine's daughter had made to me not so many hours before.

"He said he wished he was."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV

"BY JOVE," said Mr. Spenlove, suddenly, after a long silence, "I have often wondered what might have happened to us if young Siddons hadn't tumbled down there and smashed himself up. I mean, supposing our minds hadn't been taken off the great subject of Captain Macedoine's financial projects. Because, mind you, although I behaved in a very sagacious manner while discussing the matter with Jack and his wife, I'm not at all prepared to say that I wouldn't have submitted if Jack had urged it in his tempestuous way. The psychology of being stung is a very complicated affair. We pride ourselves on our strong, clear vision and so forth, but it is very largely bluff. We are all reeds shaken by the winds of desire. In spite of my sagacity the notion of making a fortune was alluring. When I came to think of it the idea of a few years of ruthless exploitation of the toiling inhabitants of a region for which I had no sympathy, followed by a dignified return to England with a sunny competence—say ten thousand a year,

Digitized by Google

afforded an attractive field for the development of one's personality. I suppose it comes to all of us at times—a vision of ourselves with the power to expand to the utmost. And at the back of it all lay the exasperating and tantalizing thought that it *might* be possible. The very preposterousness of the suggestion was in its favour, in a way. The very fact that nobody else had ever thought of making a fortune out of Macedonia led one to wonder if it might not be done. You get an idea like that in your head, and it lies there and simmers and seethes, and finally boils over and you have taken the plunge. That's what might have happened, if I had not gone ashore to look for young Siddons, and accidentally beheld the great Captain Macedoine himself and his lieutenant. I don't say that the mere view of these two worthies discussing their plans was sufficient to convince me of their rascality. I'm not convinced of that even now. What I did acquire, even before young Siddons drove the whole matter into the background, was a sudden sense of proportion. To associate a golden fortune with those two shabby and cadaverous birds of prey was too much. And when we got aboard again the whole proposition seemed to have vanished into thin air.

"Of course everyone was excited. Jack had to take hold and give orders. He shut his wife and

Digitized by Google

youngster up in their cabin, ordered us all out of the saloon except the steward, and set to work on young Siddons, who was lying on the table with a towel under his head. Mr. Bloom, who had been rushing to and fro making friends with the Second, the Third, and even the donkey man, in a frenzied attempt to get information about the coal which was to be sold the next day, now favoured me with a heart-to-heart talk on the subject of professional etiquette. It was a mistake, in his opinion as an experienced ship's officer, for the Captain to be a surgeon as well. It was time we took a firm stand. Owners should be informed that this primitive and obsolete state of affairs could be no longer tolerated. Now when he was sailing under the Cuban flag, they always carried a surgeon. Compelled to by law. Of course one couldn't let a man die for lack of attention; but if he was in Captain Evans' shoes, he would send in a report with a formal protest appended. Do everything courteously and in due form but—be firm! That was the trouble with sea-going officers—they were not firm with their employers. He himself, he was frank to say, had often given owners a piece of his mind, and no doubt he had suffered for it. And why? Simply because he got no support. Now he knew I wouldn't take any silly offence if he mentioned a personal matter, but really for Captain Evans to send

Digitized by Google

an engineer ashore in a boat was in the highest degree unprofessional. It was a job for an executive officer, obviously. Not that he wished to criticise—far from it—but *verb. sap* as they say at Oxford and Cambridge. A word to the right man, mind you, was worthy any amount of useless argument with—well, he wouldn't mention any names, but I knew what he meant, no doubt.

"How long this enchanted imbecile would have continued his monologue I shouldn't care to say, if Jack had not called me down to help get young Siddons into his bunk. The collar-bone, broken more than once at football, would knit nicely, he said, and he had put a couple of neat stitches in the gash over the eye. Made him shout, Jack admitted as he washed his hands with carbolic soap, but what was a little pain compared with being disfigured for life? He reckoned it would heal up and leave no more than a faint scar. What did I reckon he was doing, eh? Funny for him to leave the boat. Very unusual. What did I think?

"'Didn't he give you any explanation?' I enquired.

"'Well, I suppose you can call it an explanation,' said Jack, 'in a way. He said he went ashore for a few minutes on a private matter, and he would appreciate it if I took his word. I'm supposed to keep the matter private, too, so keep your trap shut,

Digitized by Google

Fred. Fact is,' he went on, 'it's that gel's at the bottom of it. He's one of those young fellers who take it hard when they do take it. What they call in novvels hopeless passion.'

"I was surprised at Jack's penetration. Indeed I was surprised at his allusion to what he called 'novvels' for he had never, so far as I knew, read any. Perhaps he had taken a surreptitious squint at some of the exemplary serials which Mrs. Evans affected.

"'Then you won't take any action?' I said.

"'Why should I? He's had an accident, that's all. If he'd fell down and broke his neck, it would be different. As it is, he's had a lesson. I must go up and take a look round.'

"Jack went up on deck to take a look at the mooring ropes, for the weather is treacherous in spring and autumn hereabouts, and more than once we had to slip and run out to sea. I stepped into the little alleyway on the port-side and walked along to young Siddons' room. The door was on the hook and a bright bar of light lay athwart the floor of the alleyway. He was lying on his back as we had left him, his unbandaged eye staring straight up at the deck overhead. As I opened the door and closed it behind me he turned that eye upon me without moving his head.

"'All right?' I asked, just for something to say. He made a slight gesture with his hand, signifying, I

Digitized by Google

imagine, that it was nothing. His face had that expression of formidable composure which the young assume to conceal their emotions. I don't know exactly why I bothered myself with him just then. Perhaps because there is for me a singular fascination in watching the young. I won't say it is affection, because our relations are usually of the sketchiest description. Sometimes I don't know them at all. I fancy it is because one sees oneself in them surrounded by the magical glamour of an incorruptible destiny. As we say, they are refreshing, even in their griefs, and there is something in the theory that we, as we are crossing the parched areas of middle age, can draw upon their spiritual vitality to our own advantage if not to theirs.

"'Nothing you want, eh?' I said, looking round. The one bright eye stared straight up again.

"'Will you do me a favour, Chief?' he asked in a low tone.

"'Of course I will,' I answered. 'What is it?'

"'If you wouldn't mind, when you go ashore, to see Miss Macedoine and tell her I am sorry she couldn't—you see,' he broke off, suddenly, 'I said I'd see her this evening. I went up . . . she wasn't there. I couldn't wait . . . boat waiting, you know. Then something . . . well, I fell down. Would you mind?'

Digitized by Google

"'I'll tell her,' I said. 'Is she fond of you?'

"His eye closed and he lay as motionless as though he were dead.

"'I don't suppose it matters now,' he remarked, very quietly. 'I shan't see her again, very likely. Only I thought—if you told her how it was . . . you understand?'

"'I tell you what I'll do,' I replied. 'I'll ask her to come and see you. Isn't that the idea?'

"'Yes, that's the idea,' he returned with extraordinary bitterness. 'That's all it's likely to be—an idea. I never did have any luck. It's always the way, somehow. The things you want . . . you can't get. And now, this . . . I say, Chief.'

"'Well?'

"'Excuse me, won't you, talking like this. I'm awfully grateful really. It means a good deal to me, if she only knows I meant to be there. She said I could—if I liked.'

"'Isn't she playing with you?' I asked, harshly. He put up his hand.

"'No, she's not that sort. She's different from other girls. She's had a rotten time . . . I can't tell you . . . It would have been different if she was coming home with us. Everything seems against me. No matter . . . a chap has to put up with his luck, I suppose.'

Digitized by Google

"'You'll pick up,' I suggested, without much brilliance I am afraid. He made no reply, lying with a sort of stern acquiescence in the enigmatic blows of fate.

"And the next day, when the ore was crashing into the holds and the ship lay in a red fog of dust, Jack and I went ashore on our business. I remember Mr. Bloom walking to and fro on the bridge deck with the Second Mate, nudging him facetiously as they passed the Second, who was rigging his tackle over the bunker, and nodding toward us as we made our way among the ore-trucks and down to the beach. The Second had told me that 'the nosey blighter' had been making inquiries about the coal, with sly innuendoes dusted over his sapient remarks. It was a subject to which Mr. Bloom's lofty conceptions of 'professional etiquette' would do full justice. As we climbed the steps which ran up outside Grünbaum's house, I was wondering to myself if I should be able to redeem my promise to young Siddons. There seemed small likelihood of it unless I took Jack into our confidence. We entered a high stone passage through the farther end of which we could see Grünbaum's orchard and Grünbaum's five children playing under the trees in the care of a fat Greek woman. We turned to the left into an immense chamber with a cheap desk and office chair in one corner. The whitewashed walls were decorated

Digitized by Google

with oleographs of imaginary Greek steamships, all funnels and bridge, with towering knife-like prows cleaving the Atlantic at terrific speed. There were advertisements of Greek and Italian insurance companies, too, and a battered yellow old map of the Cyclades. And standing at the tall windows was a figure in a frock coat squinting through a telescope. He put it down hurriedly as we entered, walked across to the desk, and resting his hand on it, made us a bow. This was Monsieur Nikitos, the lieutenant of the mighty enterprise. I must confess that his pose at that moment was less of the financier than of a world-famous virtuoso at the piano bowing to a tumult of applause.

"'This is the Chief Engineer,' said Jack. The virtuoso favoured me with a special bow, and waved his hand to a couple of chairs.

"'Take a seat, Captain. Take a seat, Mister Chief. Mr. Grünbaum is engaged at the moment. I take the opportunity of mentioning the little matter we discussed yesterday, Captain. I have no doubt you will take shares in our company.'

"Jack looked at me, and I regarded Monsieur Nikitos with fresh interest. He was a most mysterious creature to look at, now we were close to him. He was quite young, not more than twenty-five, and the black fuzz on his face gave him a singularly dirty

Digitized by Google

appearance. As he sat in his swivel chair with the tails of his dusty frock coat draped over the arms, tapping his large white teeth with his pen and brushing his black hair from his blotchy forehead, he suddenly gave me the impression of a poet trying to think of a rhyme.

"'We have decided,' I said, and he dropped his hands and inclined his ear, 'to think it over.' He slumped back in his chair, smiled, and shook his head. Then he straightened up and reaching for a ruler looked critically at it.

"'We cannot wait. In affairs of finance one must think quickly, then act—so!' He snapped his thumb and finger. 'If not, the chance is gone. Now I show you. To-day, Captain Macedoine resigns. Yes! To-morrow, *I* resign. Like that. To-morrow also, Monsieur Spilliazeza, our invaluable manager of works, resigns! To-night, the *Osmanli* calls for the mails. We go by the *Osmanli*, our vessel, to Saloniki. We arrive. We take action at once.' He waved his arms. 'Action! Next week it will be too late. Option taken up, work commenced, contracts awarded, organization complete. It is all here.' He tapped his forehead. 'I have it complete, in inauguration, here.' And he regarded us with a gaze of rapt abstraction in his brilliant black eyes.

Digitized by Google

"I don't mind telling you that the chief impression this performance made upon me was that he was a lunatic. Jack was staring solemnly at him. I imagine he began to have doubts of the wisdom of entrusting this creature with real money. And then a bell tinkled, one of a pair of high dark folding doors opened, and I had a glimpse of a great room where an enormously fat man sat in the curve of a vast horseshoe shaped desk. It was only a momentary view, you understand, of the diffused light shed by three tall windows upon a chamber of unusual size. I had an impression of glancing into a museum, a glimpse of a statue, very white and tall with an arm broken off short, gleaming glass cases of small things that shone like opals and aquamarines, and great bunches of coral like petrified foam. I saw all this as the door stood for a moment, the fezzed head of a little old gentleman looking out and mumbling the word '*Kapitan!*' We stood up. Jack made a movement to go in. Monsieur Nikitos came between us and regarded us as though we were conspirators.

"'Monsieur Grünbaum will see the Kapitan,' he remarked in a loud voice, and then in a whisper, 'Of this—not a word.' And he pressed his knuckles to his lips. And then Jack passed into the room, the door closed softly, and I was alone with Monsieur Nikitos.

Digitized by Google

"My feelings at that moment, you know, were mixed. I was astonished. I was amused. I was indignant. I looked at the frock-coated figure before me with an expression of profound distaste and contempt. He gave me a confidential smile and indicated a chair. I sat down, looking at the closed folding doors. And as I sat there I became aware that Monsieur Nikitos was indulging in a whispered monologue. I caught the words—man of wide views—great wealth—vast experience—unlimited prospects—unique grasp of detail—necessary in affairs—man of affairs . . . and then, in a lower tone—daughter—beauty—happiness—future—efforts redoubled—found fortunes—ideals—cannot express feelings—humble aspirations—many years—ambition—travel. . . .

"I suppose I must have made some sound to indicate my coherent interest in this unlooked-for rigmarole, for he sprang up, and placed himself between me and the folding doors. He bent his head to my ear. He desired to know if I considered my Kapitan reliable. Would he invest? That was the thing. Would he invest? Had he character? Why did he ask? Because he had a design. The Swedish Kapitan who had invested was a single man, a man of no education, I was to understand—no culture. But my Kapitan was a married man. Of

Digitized by Google

course he would settle in Saloniki, that fairest jewel in the Turkish crown. He himself knew a house in a good street—just the thing. He was anxious about this because he himself would shortly become a married man. He sat down abruptly and waved the ruler. As in a dream I sat there listening to his words. I have a notion now that he gave me his whole life history. I recall reference to—early years—great ambitions—great work—frustrated—years of exile—unique qualifications—international journalism—special correspondent—highly commended—friend of liberty—confidential agent, and so on. He had an immense command of rapidly enunciated phrases which were run together and interspersed with melodramatic pauses and gestures. And I said nothing—nothing at all. He ran on, apparently quite satisfied that I had a deep and passionate interest in his vapourings. As a matter of fact, I paid very little attention. I was wondering whether it would be worth my while to obtain an interview with the girl, if what he had hinted were true, that her assistance in her father's designs was to marry this eloquent lieutenant and satisfy his 'humble aspirations.' And while I wondered I heard harsh words uttered within the folding doors—*confidence in my dispositions*—said a voice of grating power and guttural sound. Monsieur Nikitos looked

Digitized by Google

at me for an instant and waved his ruler. He muttered. He alluded to tyrannical obstinacy—unimaginative autocracy—intolerable domination—and other polysyllabic enormities. The harsh voice went on in an unintelligible rumble, rising again to 'post of a secretarial nature—a man of undeserved misfortune—my disgust—effrontery to submit—resignation.' I listened, and Monsieur Nikitos, who was gazing at me, gradually assumed an expression of extreme alarm. He rose and went on tip-toe into the outer hall. He reappeared suddenly with a broad-brimmed felt hat on his head. He muttered some excuses—appointment—return immediately—urgent necessity—apologies—in a moment—and tip-toed away again, leaving me alone.

"I was beginning to think Jack had forgotten all about me when he came out and closed the door behind him. We walked out into the passage together, but he made no remark until I asked him if it was all right about the coal. He said yes, it was all right, but what did I think? That chap Macedoine was a wrong-un, according to Grünbaum. Trying to get control. Grünbaum had sacked him. After fetching his daughter out for him, too. It was true, what Nikitos had told us. They were going all right but because they had to. Grünbaum was in a devil of a rage over it. Had cabled to Paris to send out some

Digitized by Google

more men. Good job he'd had the notion of asking Grünbaum about it, eh? Might have lost our money. Now he came to think of it, that Greek didn't look very reliable. Was I coming back on board?

"We paused on the beach, where a few fishing boats were drawn up and the nets lay in the sun drying.

"'I don't think I will,' I said. 'I guess I'll take a walk up the cliff over there. When will you pull off to the buoys?'

"'Not a minute after five,' he returned. 'It's none so safe here at night. Steam ready all the time remember, Fred. Grünbaum was just giving me a friendly warning.'

"I started off for a walk up the cliff. The point where the path cut round the corner stood sharp against the sky and led me on. As I gained the beginning of the rise I could look back and down into Grünbaum's garden where lemon, fig, plum, and almond trees grew thickly above green grass cut into sectors by paths of white marble flags and with a fountain sending a thin jet into the air. I could see children playing about under the trees, but there were no birds. There were no birds on the island. I realized this perfectly irrelevant fact at that moment, and I became aware of the singular isolation of this

Digitized by Google

man living under the gigantic shadow of the mountain. It gave me a sudden and profound consciousness of his extreme security against the designs of imaginative illusionists. The vast bulk of the man became identified in my mind with the tremendous mass of rock against which I was leaning. The momentary glimpses into his office, the memory of the bizarre conjunction of ancient statuary with the furniture of business and money-making, the harsh voice reverberating through the lofty chambers, gave me a feeling that I had been assisting at some incredible theatrical performance. I started off again. I felt I needed a walk. After all, these reflections were but an idle fancy. Jack and I were not likely to risk our small savings in any such wildcat schemes. Jack's words about pulling off to the buoys had recalled me to a sense of serious responsibility. One always had that hanging over one while in Ipsilon. Grünbaum, from his secure fastness under the mountain, was familiar with the incalculable treachery of the wind and sea.

"I was soon far above the habitation of men. Above me slanted the masses of weathered limestone and marble; below, reduced to the size of a child's toy, I could see the *Manola*. At intervals I could hear a faint rattle and another cloud of red dust would rise from her deck, like the smoke of a bom-

Digitized by Google

bardment. Far below me were a tiny group of men at work in a quarry. They seemed to be engaged in some fascinating game. They clustered and broke apart, running here and there, crouching behind boulders, and remaining suddenly still. There would be a dull thump, a jet of smoke, and a few pieces of rock, microscopic to me, would tumble about. And then all the pigmy figures would run out again and begin industriously to peck at these pieces, like ants, and carry them, with tiny staggerings, out of sight. I watched them for a moment and then walked on until I came to the corner where the path curves to the right and eventually confronts the open sea. I was alone with the inaccessible summits and the soft murmur of invisible waves breaking upon half-tide rocks. I was in mid-air with a scene of extraordinary beauty and placidity spread before me. The sea, deep blue save where it shallowed into pale green around the farther promontory, was a mirror upon which the shadows of clouds flickered and passed like the moods of an innocent soul. In the distance lay the purple masses of other islands, asleep. It was as though I were gazing upon a beautiful and empty world, awaiting the inevitable moment when men should claim the right to destroy its loveliness. . . .

"At intervals along the face of the cliff were

Digitized by Google

tunnels which led through the marble shell of the mountain into the veins of ore. I walked along looking for a place to sit down, stepping from tie to tie of the narrow-gauge track along which the mine trucks were pushed by Grünbaum's islanders. I suppose the vein had petered out up there. . . . I don't know. One of Grünbaum's dispositions, perhaps. Anyhow it was deserted. I came to a huge mass of rock projecting from the face, so that the track swerved outward to clear it. I walked carefully round and stopped suddenly.

"She was sitting there, leaning against the entrance to a working, and looking out across the sea. Without alarm or resentment she turned her head slightly and looked at me, and then bent her gaze once more upon the distance. I hesitated for a moment, doubtful of her mood, and she spoke quietly.

"'What is it?' she asked. I went up and stood by her.

"'I have a message for you,' I remarked, and took out a cigarette. 'But I had no idea you were up here. In fact, I dare say I should have gone back on board without giving it to you.'

"'What is it?' she said again, and this time she looked at me.

"'You don't know, I suppose,' I said, 'that Siddons —the Third Mate—has had an accident?'

Digitized by Google

"She looked away and paused before answering.

"'I see,' she remarked, though what she saw I did not quite comprehend at the moment. It seemed a strange comment to make.

"'Oh, come!' I said. 'Don't say you're not interested.'

"'How did it happen?' she enquired, looking at her shoe.

"I told her. She turned her foot about as though examining it, her slender hands clasped on her lap. She had an air of being occupied with some problem in which I had no part.

"'And the message?' she said at length. I gave her that, too, briefly, and without any colouring of my own. She put one leg over the other, clasping her knee with her hands, and bent forward, looking suddenly at me from under bent brows.

"'What can I do?' she demanded in a low tone.

"'But don't you see,' I returned. 'He's in love with you.'

"She gave a faint shrug of the shoulders and uttered a sound of amusement.

"'Then you are indifferent?' I asked, annoyed.

"'What else can I be?' she said. 'Boys always think they are in love. I don't think much of that sort of love.' And she fell silent again, looking at the sea.

Digitized by Google

"'Look here, my dear,' I said abruptly, 'tell me about it. I'm in the dark. Can't I help you?'

"'No,' she said. 'You can't. Nobody can help me. I'm in a fix.'

"'But how?' I persisted.

"'Do you suppose,' she said, slowly, 'that nobody has been in love with me before I came on your ship? I thought you'd understand, when I told you I had never had any luck. I haven't. I had no one to tell me. I thought people were kinder, you know —men, I mean. And now all I can do is wait . . . wait. Sometimes I wish I was dead, wish I'd never been born! Before you came up, I was wondering if I couldn't just jump—finish it all up—no more waiting. And then I found I hadn't the pluck to do that. I tried to tell Mrs. Evans once, give her a hint somehow, but she doesn't understand. She's safe. She's got a husband as well as . . . no matter. I was going to tell you, one evening, you remember, but I got scared. I didn't feel sure about you. Oh, I'm sorry, of course, about Mr. Siddons. I liked him, you know. He's a gentleman. But even gentlemen are very much the same as anybody else.'

"'But what will you do?' I asked in astonishment.

"'I must go with my father,' she replied, stonily. 'He wants me to be with him. He is not happy here. He is misunderstood. He is going into business with

Digitized by Google

my—with another man. We are going to Saloniki. I dare say I shall do as he wishes. That's what a daughter should do, isn't it?' And her eyes flickered toward me again.

"I didn't answer, and there was a long silence. I had no words of consolation for that solitary soul engaged in the sombre business of waiting. And I understood the trivial rôle which young Siddons played in her tragic experience. To her we were all pasteboard figures actuated by a heartless and irrelevant destiny. Fate had shut the door upon her with a crash, and she was alone with her griefs in an alien world. I put my arm round her shoulders. She looked at me with hard bright eyes, her red lips firmly set.

"'Can I help you?' I whispered. She shook her head. 'At least,' I went on, 'you can write to me, if you were in trouble—ever. I would like you to feel that someone is thinking of you.'

"'It's kind of you,' she said, with a faint smile, 'but *you* wouldn't be able to do much. Oh! I know what men are,' she added with a hysterical little laugh. 'Always thinking of themselves. There's always that behind everything they do. They don't mean it, but it's there, all the time. Even you wouldn't do anything to make yourself uncomfortable, you know.'

Digitized by Google

"'You don't think a great deal of us,' I remonstrated, taking my arm away.

"'No, I don't!' she said with sudden hard viciousness of tone. 'I've had very little reason to, so far.'

"'You are meeting trouble half way, going on like this,' I said, severely. 'Come now. I insist. Promise me you will write when you get to Saloniki. Here, I'll give you my address.' And I gave it to her. She sighed.

"'I'm not afraid of life,' she said, 'when it is fair play. But I haven't had fair play. I've been up against it every time. If I got a chance——'

"'What sort of a chance?' I asked, curiously. There was a look of savage determination on her face, and she clenched her teeth and hands on the word 'chance.'

"'Oh, I'm not done yet,' she exclaimed to the air. 'I'm in a fix, but if I ever get out of it alive, look out!'

"'What do you mean?' I asked again.

"'Nothing that you would approve of,' she answered, dropping her voice. 'Nothing any of you would approve of.'

"'That means it's something foolish,' I remarked.

"'Perhaps. We'll see,' she retorted.

"'I would like to have taken a word back to young Siddons,' I hinted. 'Just to show you cared a little.'

Digitized by Google

"'But I don't!' she burst out. 'I don't! He bothered me to let him come and see me and I said—I don't know what I said. Tell him anything you like. I don't care. I'm sick of it all there!'

"'You are making it very hard for me,' I said, gently, and she flung round suddenly and faced me, her eyes shining, her lips parted in a rather mirthless smile. She was an extraordinarily beautiful creature just then. Her face, with its slightly broad, firmly modelled nostrils, the small ears set close under the cloud of soft dark hair, and the thick black eyebrows, was informed with a kind of radiance that heightened the sinister impression of her scorn. She regarded me steadfastly as though she had had her curiosity suddenly aroused.

"'You!' she said. 'Hard for you? What is there hard for you anywhere? *You* don't take any chances. Humph!' and she turned away again.

"'Just what does that mean?' I enquired. 'If you don't care anything about young Siddons, you're hardly likely to care much about any of the rest of us.'

"'No?' she said, tauntingly. 'No?'

"'I offered you my sympathy,' I began, and she turned on me again.

"'This?' she asked, holding up the address I had given her. 'What's the good of this, if I wanted help?'

Digitized by Google

"'But what can I do?' I insisted. 'Use me. Tell me what you want me to do!'

"'Well,' she said in a dry, hard voice and looking away out to sea. 'I suppose you know what a girl in my position usually wants of a single man, don't you?'

"'But, my child,' I said, 'this is extraordinary!'

"'Oh, don't "*my child*" me,' she retorted in a passion. 'I thought you understood.'

"Well, I suppose I had understood in a vague sort of way, but I certainly had not credited her with any active designs of this sort. And while I sat beside her reflecting upon the precarious nature of a bachelor's existence, I found she had glanced round upon me again, her expression at once critical and derisive. She saw through my sentimental interest in her affairs. She knew that at the first signal of danger to my own peace and position I would sheer off, regretfully but swiftly. Of course she was perfectly right. The mere thought of her father and his mangy lieutenant was sufficient. She had so much against her. It was horrible. As I sat there counting up the handicaps which Fate had imposed upon her I was aware of that critical and derisive smile regarding me over her shoulder. And I felt ashamed. I had an uneasy feeling that she was thinking of my severely paternal manner when I put

Digitized by Google

my arm round her and made her take my address. She thought more of young Siddons, no doubt, more even of Nikitos, who was willing to marry her without knowing her secret, than she did of me. That is one of the penalties of remaining a super in the play. The leading lady regards you with critical derision or she doesn't regard you at all.

"'Let us suppose,' I suggested after a silence, 'that I do understand. Then why do you turn down young Siddons?'

"She made a sound and a gesture of impatience.

"'Oh, because of any amount of reasons,' she said, looking out to sea again. 'A lot I'd see of him if he knew.'

"'Doesn't he? He told me you had had a bad time.' She shrugged her shoulders.

"'I told him some sort of tale, just to pass the time. I'm not such a fool. *You* can tell him if you like,' she laughed shortly. 'I knew a girl in the office who was engaged. She told him one day, after making him promise to be her friend, and he nearly killed her, and left her.'

"'Young Siddons wouldn't do that,' I asserted.

"'No, he's a gentleman,' she sneered. 'He'd sail away. A handy profession, a sailor's!'

"I must confess that I was hypocrite enough to be shocked at this. She wasn't far wrong, though.

Digitized by Google

We do sail away, most of us, whether we are gentlemen or not. I suppose we are all of us, at times, the victims of the perplexing discrepancy between romance and reality. Only I wonder why it is so many of us recover, and think of our escapades with a shamefaced grin on our damaged countenances. They say these tremendous emotional experiences tend to make us nobler. Why is it, when we come to analyze ourselves and others in middle life, we seem to find nothing save the dried-up residues of dead passions and the dregs of relinquished aspirations? Why is it the young can see through our tattered make-ups and judge us so unfalteringly and with such little mercy? No doubt we get our revenge, if we live long enough and are sufficiently rapacious to take it!

"Yes, I was shocked, and she regarded me with defiant derision in her bright dark eyes. She challenged me. I needn't tell you I did not then accept. Here was a woman making the supreme appeal, locked up in a castle kept by a whole regiment of ogres, and challenging me to come to her rescue. And, as she put it, I sailed away.

"'And besides,' she broke in on me with a short laugh, 'thirty shillings a week! You can't keep house on that anywhere, as far as I know.'

"This shocked me, too, until I reflected that this

Digitized by Google

girl was not making sentimental overtures, that she was simply explaining her extremely secular reasons for rejecting a particular candidate. She was in that mood and predicament. You can call it, with a certain amount of truth, a girl's cross-roads. It certainly seems to me to be a more momentous point in a woman's life than the accepted and conventional crisis which confronts virginity. A man may successfully deceive a woman, as we phrase it (rather ineptly), and make not the smallest impression upon her personality or character. But the man who assumes the abandoned function of protector, no matter what you call him, is invested with tremendous powers. No power on earth can bring her back from the road on which he sets her feet. She's got to take her cue from him. I suppose she knows this, and when the time comes to mark down her victim she brings to the business all the resources of her feminine intuition and the remorseless judgment of a panther's spring. The ruthless reference to poor young Siddons' six pounds a month wages—thirty shillings a week—illustrates the mood exactly. Mind you, it is absurd to accuse a girl of being merely callous and mercenary when she talks like that. She is really merciful to her rejections in the long run. And she is proceeding on the very rational argument that a man's value to a woman may be

Digitized by Google

roughly gauged by the value the world sets on him. She is not merely a greedy little fool. Women upon whom such decisions are forced achieve extraordinary skill in estimating the characters of men. Young chaps like Siddons simply don't count—they are thrown to the discard at once. Innocence and purity of soul are not negotiable assets in this sort of thing. Even men with merely a great deal of money are not so successful as one might imagine. They fizzle out if they lack the character which the woman admires. I have seen them fizzle. A man who roves as I do, reserving for himself, as I have insisted, the part of a super in the play, naturally has many opportunities of watching the lives of these emotional adventurers and the women who constitute the inspiration of the adventures. The singularity of the present instance was that, for the first time in my life, I was assisting at the inauguration of such a career. That is how I interpreted her enigmatic references to 'something I would not approve of.' And when I had got that far I could see it was useless to bring in Siddons any more. His destiny lay ahead. I have no doubt he achieved it with chivalrous rectitude. We English have a way of weathering the gales of passion.

"I was turning these things over in my mind as we sat up there on the cliff and half regretting, perhaps,

Digitized by Google

my usual inability to play up to my romantic situation when she raised her hand and pointed out to sea. The surface of the ocean lay like shimmering satin in the hush of the afternoon, but far away a small black blot, with a motionless trail of smoke astern, moved at the apex of a diverging ripple. She pointed to it and looked at me with that hard, bright, radiant smile. It certainly was significant. This was the *Osmanli*, the little tin-kettle steamboat in which her father had invested his capital, the humble beginning of that vast enterprise, the Anglo-Hellenic Development Company. The actual presence of that forlorn little vessel made a profound difference to our words. It was impossible to deny that Captain Macedoine's dreams might come true after all. His remarkable countenance might yet feature in our magazines as one of our great captains of industry, while I, with old Jack, pursued our obscure ways, the victims of a never-ending regret. The *Osmanli* came on, slowly pushing that immense ripple across the opaline floors. Perhaps the girl perceived the significance of this. Her hand dropped to her lap but she continued to regard me in a sort of defiant silence. There! she seemed to say, there lies our future, wide as the sea, glorious as the afternoon sun on purple isles and the fathomless blue of heavens! She was extraordinarily lovely. I found myself

Digitized by Google

trying to picture the sort of man who would appear later to fashion her destiny—perhaps one of the capitalists who would inevitably be drawn into the great enterprise. She would develop tremendously. For a moment I felt an access of regret at my renunciation. Too late, no doubt. But I have not scrupled since to think of what might have been, had I not—well, lost my nerve, let us say, and preferred to keep in the cool, shadowy by-ways of life. That's what her bright, defiant smile really meant, I believe now. I was no use to her because I didn't dare to grab her and take the consequences. They say women nowadays are rebelling against being possessed. The trouble seems to be rather that so many men shrink from the trouble and the strain and responsibility that possession entails. Too much civilization, I suppose. We are afraid of looking foolish, afraid of taking a chance. We sail away. And when we read in the news of some intrepid soul who does take a chance, who snatches a breathless woman off her feet and gallops thundering through all our mean and cowardly conventions and finishes up perhaps with a bullet in his brain, we shrug and mutter that he was a fool. We remain safe and die in our beds, but we have to suffer in silence that bright, critical, derisive smile which means 'Thou art afraid!'"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V

"YES, afraid!" said Mr. Spenlove, suddenly, after another long pause, as though one of the silent and recumbent forms under the awning had contradicted him. "We have got so that no man dare do anything off his own bat, as we say. We hunt in packs. It makes no difference whether the individual man is a saint or a sinner.

"We pull him down. Our whole scheme of life has been designed to put a premium on the tame and well-behaved, on the careful and steady householder and his hygienic *ménage*. We read with regret of disorder in various parts of the world, and we despatch our legions from our own immaculate shores to 'restore order.' Punitive expeditions we call them. We have assumed the rôle of policeman in an ebullient world. Faith, Love, Courage, are well enough if they declare a dividend and fill up the necessary forms. We are dominated by the domestic. Women like Mrs. Evans wield enormous power. It is not so much that they have character as characteristics.

Digitized by Google

They are the priestesses of the Temples of Home. I used to watch that woman on the voyage to England. I was inspired by a new and rabid curiosity. I wanted to see her in that aspect of security which had moved the girl with such bitterness. Because Mrs. Evans hadn't struck me as very safe when I had last seen her, sending out wireless calls to me in her extremity. She had been sure I would give dear Jack the best advice. That, in her private mind, was my mission on earth—to minister to the needs of her and her angel child. But she was safe now. She would greet me in what for her was almost a melting mood. I was the confidant of the angel child's imaginary maladies. I was permitted to be by while this precious being, sitting among blankets after her bath, was fed with a highly nitrogenous extract of something or other from a cup. Once I made a remark to the effect that they would have to get a fresh nurse when they got home. Mrs. Evans bridled. She drew down the corners of her mouth and remarked that in future she would look after Babs herself.

"'But,' I said, 'if you could get a girl like Miss Macedoine.' Mrs. Evans kept her gaze on Babs, who was staring at me over the rim of the cup with her bold, protuberant black eyes like those of some marine animal.

Digitized by Google

"'No,' she said, 'girls like that are too much trouble.'

"'You mean—followers?' I suggested. Mrs. Evans turned red and moved slightly.

"'She wasn't nice,' she replied, coldly, and pronounced it 'neyce.'

"'Oh,' I said, 'I wasn't aware you knew.' She got redder.

"'I don't know what you are talking about,' she muttered. 'As far as I could see, she was very fortunate in getting her passage out free, very fortunate. She was not neyce with Babs. Babs didn't take to her. Children *know!*'

"'Still,' I said, looking at the omniscient Babs lying back in repletion and trying to decide upon some fresh demand, 'Still, I felt sorry for her, a pretty creature like that, at a dangerous age, you know . . .' I had to stop, for Mrs. Evans' usually pale features were a dull brick red. Her head was drawn back and she became rigid with disapproval. This is what I mean when I say such women wield enormous power. They are panoplied in prejudice and conventional purity. Mrs. Evans was like that. She was safe. She was a pure woman. I looked at her thin, peaked little features as she replaced the blanket about the kicking limbs of the angel child and thought of that girl with her

Digitized by Google

bright, defiant, derisive smile challenging me to high adventure. Mrs. Evans' function in life was not to challenge but to disapprove. She could endure no discussion of the fundamentals. She could read tales of passion and rape, and not a flicker of emotion would cross that pallid face. But there must be no spoken word. Instinctively she drew back and became rigid, protecting her immaculate soul and the angel child from the faintest breath of reality. In that flat bosom raged a hatred, a horror, of beauty and the desire of it—a conviction that it was neither good nor evil, but simply strange, foreign, unknown, unsuitable; incompatible with the semi-detached house on the Portsmouth Road whose photograph hung on the bulkhead behind her. There was something shocking in the contrast this woman presented to her environment out there. Grünbaum, living under the shadow of his mountain, claiming from the world 'confidence in his dispositions'; Macedoine and his lieutenant devising fantastic skin-games to be played out among the haunts of the old Cabirian gods; Artemisia fighting her own sad little battle with the fates and steeling her soul with reckless resolutions; even old Jack, no bad prototype of the ancient ship-masters who ran their battered biremes up on yonder beach to mend their storm-strained gear—all were more or less congruous with this old

Digitized by Google

Isle of Ipsilon, where Perseus grew to manhood and from whose shores he set out on his journey to find Medusa. But not she. She transcended experience. To know her made one incredulous of one's own spiritual adventures. One nursed indelicate and never-to-be-satisfied curiosities about her emotional divagations. She once confessed, in a tone of querulous austerity, that she 'lived only for the child.' Possibly this was the key. Beauty and Love, and even Life itself, as men understood them, were to her the shocking but inevitable conditions of attaining to an existence consecrated to her neat and toy-like ideal. I am only explaining how she impressed me. As you say, she was, and is, simply a respectable married woman. But respectable married women, when you live with them without being married to them, are sometimes very remarkable manifestations of human nature.

"Yes, I used to watch that woman on the voyage home. I was full of curiosity about her. I was loth to believe in a human being so insensitive to what we usually call human emotions. There was difficulty about getting her ashore in Algiers. It was only when Jack said she would get smothered in coal-dust if she stayed that she consented to go at all. She came back with a very poor opinion of Africa. It appears that it was hot and they did not know at the café how

Digitized by Google

to make tea. A mosquito had had the effrontery to bite Babs. I was informed of this momentous adventure after we had gone to sea again, though Mrs. Evans had been cultivating a certain evasion where I was concerned since our talk about Artemisia. She had sheered off from me and tried to pump Jack about the girl. He came to me, his bright brown eyes globular with the news. What did I know, eh? Missus was saying she'd heard there was something fishy about the gel. Not that he'd be surprised. It only showed, he went on, how particular a man had to be. Gel like that ought to be *married*. Mrs. Evans was very particular whom she had about. Always had been. I knew, of course, how carefully she'd been brought up. A lady. There was something about that gel . . . no, he never could give it a name, but he didn't like it. Bad for the kid. Children *knew*. And they were the devil for picking things up. Here was Angelina, only the other night, getting him into a regular pickle because she'd heard him say 'damn' and brought it out plump in front of Mrs. Evans. Couldn't be too careful. Fancy a kid that age saying a thing like that—'Damn by-bye, damn by-bye!' Jack's eyes grew larger and more prominent. Mrs. Evans had been very upset when he had remarked irascibly that a ship was no place for a child anyway. No more it

Digitized by Google

was. 'Fred'—(I could see this coming, mind you, a week before)—'Fred, my boy,' said he, 'I shall be glad when we get home. I can see it now. It's a mistake. I always said so when the commander brought his wife along.' It didn't do to take a woman away from where she belonged. She saw too much, as well. What did I think she said the other day? A fact. 'You and Mr. Spenlove don't seem to me to *do* much.' Think of that! And sometimes he wondered if she didn't pay more attention to that infernal pier-head jumper, Bloom, than to her own husband. I should hear him at the cabin table—'When *I* was commander, Mrs. Evans, I always insisted on the junior officers overseeing the routine of the ship. When *I* was commander, I made it a rule that engineers should keep to their own part of the ship.' It was enough to make a man sick, but women didn't know any better. . . . Glad to get home. Was I going to Threxford?

"Well, no, I didn't go down to Threxford. I went to the station to see them off from Glasgow, though. Mrs. Evans held up the angel child for me to kiss. 'Kiss Mr. Spenlove, Babsy, darling.' The youngster favoured me with one of her bold, predatory stares as she desisted from torturing her immense teddy bear for a moment. I had a sudden and disconcerting vision of Jack's daughter as she would be—well,

Digitized by Google

as she is to-day, I expect . . . a robust, self-centred, expensively attired autocrat, ruling her parents, her friends, and her adorers with the smooth efficiency of a healthy tigress. Jack once muttered to me that she'd 'knock the men over' and he seemed to take a certain grim relish in contemplating the future overthrow of the love-sick swains. And I saw in the background of this vision, as one sees a pale bluish shadow of a form in the background of a bright, highly coloured portrait, I saw Mrs. Evans, shrinking as the angel child developed, and cowering before that nonchalant vampirism. A well-nourished young cannibal, I figure her, for such characters need human beings for their sustenance, if you take the trouble to observe their habits. I suppose she regarded me as indigestible, for she kissed me without rapture, and I never saw her again.

"And the next voyage we slipped back into our usual jog-trot round. Mr. Bloom, that fine flower of professional culture, was replaced by one of our skippers who had lost his license for a year for some highly technical reason. Jack was rather perturbed by the prospect of having a brother-captain under him, but the new chief-officer was temporarily stunned by the blow fate had dealt him and was a good fellow anyhow. Young Siddons, who was able to carry on by the time we sailed, said he was a jolly

Digitized by Google

decent old sort. Young Siddons and I had a good many talks together that voyage. He was in sore need, you know, of somebody to confide in. We all need that when we are in love. It has been my lot, more than once, to be favoured with these confidences. Tactless? Oh, no. As the Evanses said about children, these young hearts *know*. Yes, we talked, and I received fresh light upon the mysteries of passion. As Jack had said, young Siddons was the sort to take it hard. His face grew thinner and there was a new and austere expression in his fine gray eyes. We say easily, oh, the young don't die of love! But don't they? Doesn't the youth we knew die? Don't we discover, presently, that a firmer and more durable and perhaps slightly less lovable character has appeared? So it seems to me. Not that Siddons was less lovable. But the gay and somewhat care-free youth who had laughed so happily on the voyage out when the girl had stopped for a while to chat with him was dead. He had a memory to feed on now, a sombre-sweet reminiscence dashed with the faint bitterness of an inevitable frustration. He took it out of me, so to speak, using me as a confessor, not of sins, but of illusions.

"He enlightened me, moreover, concerning the mishap which had befallen him and thrown him so

Digitized by Google

definitely out of the race. He had met M. Nikitos on his way up to keep his tryst. She was standing at the door above them, silhouetted against the light, when they met on the path below. In darkness, of course. The lieutenant of the Anglo-Hellenic Development Company had adopted an extremely truculent attitude. He did not allow, he said, people from the ship to seek interviews in that clandestine manner. Ordered young Siddons to depart. Which, of course, an Englishman couldn't tolerate from a beastly dago. Punched his head. M. Nikitos, familiar with the terrain, had flung a piece of rock, and young Siddons, stepping back quickly in the first agony of the blow, had fallen over the edge, where I had found him. This was illuminating. It explained a number of obscure points which had puzzled me. I wondered, as I heard it, whether the recital of this feat to Captain Macedoine and his daughter had made any difference in the latter's attitude toward the victor. She had not regarded him with any enthusiasm when I had talked with her on the cliff, I noticed. I wondered. For you must be prepared to hear that I was tremendously preoccupied with thoughts of her at that time. That is one of the inestimable privileges of being a mere super in the play. You haven't much to do and you can let your mind dwell upon the destiny of the lead-

Digitized by Google

ing lady. You can almost call it a hobby of mine, to dwell upon the fortunes of the men and women who pass across the great stage on which I have an obscure coign of vantage. Some prefer to find their interest in novels. They brood in secret upon the erotic exhalations which rise from the Temple of Art. But I am not much of a reader, and I prefer the larger freedom of individual choice.

"And there was much in young Siddons which helped me to visualize the personality which had suddenly irradiated his soul. Of course he was English, with all the disabilities of his race to express emotion. But the need for sympathy triumphed over these, and he would come along to my room in the dog-watch when I learned something of the tremendous experience which had befallen him. The Second Engineer, who had apparently suffered very slightly indeed, for I saw him in Renfield Street one night with two young ladies on his way to the theatre, assumed an air of dry detachment when he noticed these visits. The Chief, I heard him growling to the Third one day when he thought I was out of earshot, was nursing the mates nowadays. I knew the Second disapproved of friendship on principle. His ideal was to be more or less at loggerheads with everybody. He would wait until you had made some ordinary human remark, when he would retire

Digitized by Google

into his formidable arsenal of facts and figures, and returning with a large and hard chunk of information, throw it at you and knock you down with it. His unreasonableness lay in his failure to realize that a man cannot be your friend and your enemy at the same time, that people are never grateful for being set right. He had a dry and creaking efficiency which made him silently detested. I for one rejoiced when I heard indirectly, at a later period, that a widow of forty, with seven children, had sued him for breach-of-promise.

"Young Siddons was unaware of the Second's disapproval, and would slip down after supper, ready to go on at eight, and smoke cigarettes on my settee. You men know how, in fine weather, when you walk to and fro on the bridge, the empty, dragging hours induce the shades of the past to come up and keep you company. We in the engine-room generally have enough to do to keep away the crowds of ghosts. We had fine weather most of the time and young Siddons would come down with a fresh set of impressions which he would try to explain to me. He had been down to see his people while we were at home and I imagine the impact of cheerful, prosperous, well-bred folk had done a lot to modify his views. It was difficult, he confided one evening, to reconcile one's feelings for a girl with the grave

Digitized by Google

problem of one's 'people.' Some chaps had such thundering luck. There was his brother, articled to a solicitor, who had been engaged for three years to a doctor's daughter. They were just waiting until he was admitted. Now, what luck that was! Everything in good taste. She lived in the same road. He saw her every day. Her people were well off. When the time came the brother would have the usual wedding, go to Cromer for a honeymoon, and—start life. Young Siddons was puzzled by the fact that he himself had been bowled over by a girl who, he couldn't help admitting, would not have been approved by the 'people' down in Herefordshire. He saw that! I could perceive in his air a rather amusing amazement that love was apparently the antithesis instead of the complement of happiness. Now how could that be? And yet he admitted he had never seen his brother display any rapture over his love affair with the doctor's daughter. Took it very much as a matter of course. Oh, a very nice girl, very nice. But . . . he would fall silent, his chin on his hand, recalling the memory of Artemisia as she had seemed to him, an alluring and unattainable desire.

"Yes, it was interesting, and it fed my interest in her. I was too experienced, I suppose, to expect to see her again, but it amused me to brood upon her

Digitized by Google

destiny. And it was a wish to learn something about that strange trio that took me up to Grünbaum's one afternoon when we arrived, and I had the privilege of an interview with the concessionaire himself. Surrounded by attentive minions, who had full 'confidence in his dispositions' he reposed, with the urbane placidity of a corpulent idol, in the curve of his great horseshoe desk. The yellow blinds were down over the tall windows against the westering sun, and the statue with the arm broken short gleamed like old ivory. It was startling to see a student's sword and long German pipe hanging crossed on the wall beside that ancient piece of statuary. Grünbaum confessed, when I spoke of them, to being 'largely cosmopolitan,' though loyal of course to the Hellenic Government and his consular obligations to Great Britain. When I made mention of Macedoine, he frowned heavily and admitted that he had 'taken the necessary steps.' The concessions in the Saloniki hinterland would be dealt with by the Paris House 'with a view to safeguarding our interests.' No doubt the railroad to Uskub would in time render such concessions extremely valuable. M. Nikitos doubtless obtained this information surreptitiously from the official archives. But it was necessary that these financial dispositions should be in the hands of Western

Digitized by Google

Europeans, since western capital was inevitably attracted to such enterprises. He himself was a man of western ideas. Educated in Berlin and Paris, he had been trained in affairs in Lombard Street. Our banking system was sound and our climate ferocious—so he summed us up more or less adequately. As regards the future of M. Macedoine he could tell me nothing. No doubt that gentleman would be fully occupied in setting his new venture on its feet. Oh, of course, these things occasionally prospered; but in the long run, stability of credit was essential. This, M. Macedoine, as far as could be ascertained, did not command.

"The harsh, guttural, cultured voice rolled on—the voice of established authority, of resistless financial power. To the simple and insular intelligences of the islanders his potency must have seemed god-like indeed. In this forgotten island of the sea he had assumed the rôle of arbiter of their humble destinies, the source of their happiness, and the omnipotent guardian of their fortunes. He was the head of what is deprecatingly called in these days a Servile State. We are warned that democracy is advancing to sweep up all such anachronisms and cast them into the fire. I am not so sure. None of us, who have seen the new liberty stalking through the old lands like a pestilence, are altogether sure. After all,

Digitized by Google

there is something to be said for the theory of a Golden Age. . . .

"The guttural voice rolled on. The business of the day was nearly over, and he spoke in general terms of the tendencies of the day. It was a mistake, he thought, to assume that all men were equal. He had not found it so. The Anglo-Saxon race had a genius for misgovernment on the democratic principle. He was not convinced that this could be applied to Southeastern Europe. Democracy was an illusion founded on a misconception. The power must be in one hand. Otherwise, chaos. Observe these works of supreme art about me—these exquisite examples of ancient craftsmanship—the products of a simple monarchic age. A man might be a slave, unlettered and unenfranchised, yet fashion works of imperishable beauty. Of course, the exponents of democracy denied this, but he himself was in a position to know. He had studied the past glories of the Cyclades. And he had failed to observe any striking improvement in human life when the fanatics of liberty assumed command. Liberty! It was a phantom, a *Lorelei*, singing to foolish idle men, luring them to destruction. All things, all men, are bound. This was a restless age. He regarded the future with some misgiving. We lacked men of strong character, animated by sound

Digitized by Google

ideals, an aristocracy of intellect, with financial control. . . . These, of course, were large questions. . . .

"That is the memory I have of him, the reactionary whom the romantic votaries of liberty set up against a wall and shot full of holes the other day. I don't offer any opinion. I am only puzzled. I recall the man as I saw him that afternoon, in the midst of his prosperity and his life's work, the embodiment of a cultured despotism.

"But of the girl he could tell me nothing, and it was of the girl I wished to hear. Grünbaum would not have noticed her. His own divagations, his emotional odyssies, his mistresses, would be dim memories now, and he would not have noticed her. And as young Siddons gradually developed an air of gentle and resigned melancholy, one of those moods which are the aromatic cerements of a dead love, I discovered in myself an increasingly active desire to know what had happened to her. Because I didn't even know for certain whether she had married M. Nikitos. And when we got home once more and young Siddons bade us farewell to go up to sit for his examination, I was disappointed that, as far as I could see, the longing I had to follow the Macedoines in their strange career was not to be gratified. But this so often happens in my life that I am grown

Digitized by Google

resigned. We sailed again, for Venice this time, and I admit that among the canals and palaces, with the extraordinary moods which that fair city evokes, I found my thoughts retiring from Ipsilon. We went to Spain to load that voyage, moreover, and that brought its own sheaf of alien impressions. Loaded in Cartagena, and in due course arrived at our old berth in the Queens Dock. All that is of no moment just now. What I was going to say was that I found among my few letters on arrival an envelope, addressed in an unfamiliar hand and with the crest of a great London hotel on the back. I opened it with only mild curiosity, saw it was addressed to 'Dear Mr. Chief,' and turning the page, saw it was signed 'A. M.'

"Yes, it was from her. It was a short, hurried scrawl in a rambling yet firm style, the down strokes heavy and black, half a dozen lines to the sheet. She wanted to see me. I turned it over and saw the date on the envelope was a week old. She wanted to see me if I was able to come to London. I was to ask for Madame Kinaitsky. She would be in London for two or three weeks. She did hope I could come. She had found out from the Company that the *Manola* was due soon. And she was 'mine very sincerely.'

"I admit I was, as they say, intrigued. I had

Digitized by Google

given up all hope of hearing any more of her. And I was astonished. She was in London! I was to ask for Madame Kinaitsky. Was she married then, after all? I told Jack I had to go to London on family business, and took train that night, wiring to her that I would see her next day. I needed a spell from the ship, anyhow.

"I did not, of course, put up at the immense and famous caravanserai from which she wrote. It was in the Strand, however, and the ancient and supposedly very inconvenient hotel which I usually patronize when in the metropolis was, as we say, just off the Strand. I took a room at Mason's Hotel, climbed up the dusky old staircase, and had a bath and a sleep after my night journey from the north. When I woke it was a sunny afternoon, in late September, the sort of day London sometimes gets after a summer of continuous cold rain and wind. I lunched and then I stepped across the Strand to call on Madame Kinaitsky. They say adventures are to the adventurous. Yet here was I, the least adventurous of mortals, travelling several hundred miles to meet an adventuress! I passed under the great arch into the courtyard where commissionaires of imperial magnificence were receiving and despatching motor cars that were like kings' palaces. One of these august beings deigned to direct me

Digitized by Google

within. I sent up my name—Mr. Spenlove to see Madame Kinaitsky by appointment. I sat down, watching the staircase, wondering if she was in, if she would descend to see me, wondering what it was all about, anyhow. A page in blue and silver approached me and commanded me to follow him into the elevator. We flew to the third floor and we stepped out into a corridor with thick carpets on the floor and dim masterpieces on the walls. The page led me along and knocked at one of the many doors. I remember his small, piping voice saying 'Mr. Spenlove to see you,' and the door closing. She was before me, still holding the door-knob with both hands and looking at me over her shoulder with that bright, derisive, critical smile. An exquisite pose, girlish, fascinating, yet carrying with it an adumbration of power.

"'Well,' she said, 'are you surprised?'

"She took me into another room, a room with wide windows and a great balcony overlooking the river. It was a suite. Beyond I saw a bedroom, bathroom, dressing rooms. All around were boxes with the lids lying askew, and bearing the names of the famous modistes of London and Paris. There were hats, and coats, and lines of shoes, piles of silken stuffs, parasols in long pasteboard boxes; heaps of dresses breaking into a foam of white tissue

Digitized by Google

paper. And on the tables were cases of perfume, satin-lined caskets of brushes and toilet articles, silver picture-frames, gold-chain bags, gloves, cigarette boxes. As I stood there taking this all in she came up and laughed, holding her lower lip between her teeth, as though challenging my criticism, and waiting with a certain amount of gallant trepidation for my verdict. She was enjoying my astonishment I dare say.

"'I'm surprised,' I said, 'that you wanted to see me.'

"She beckoned me to pass out on the balcony where were wicker chairs and tables. We sat down, and she told me, briefly, what had happened to her.

"No, there was no regret that I could perceive. 'I had to get something to do,' she remarked, naïvely. Her father and the lieutenant, M. Nikitos, found themselves up against mysterious and unsuspected difficulties. The boiler of the *Osmanli* collapsed and needed extended repair. The proposal that she should marry M. Nikitos was never seriously raised again. 'No, she had never had any intention . . . that little shrimp!' They took a house and lived a while on credit. She had to do something. Her father lived in a sort of trance, dealing with the difficulties which beset his schemes like a child playing with bricks continually falling down. She

Digitized by Google

had to do something, she reiterated, moving her gold bracelets to and fro on her wrist. And yet she was unable to do anything—at first. She was in the *Jardin de la Tour Blanche* when Kinaitsky spoke to her. He, a man of wealth, of the world, a vigorous connoisseur of life, was at that time emotionally at large. He had had a furious row with a Syrian dancer . . . so on and so forth. And he understood in a flash. It was plain that Artemisia would develop into one of those women who waste no time over dunderheads. When I said, reasonably enough, for she wore a wedding ring, 'Then you are not really married?' she clicked her tongue against her teeth and shrugged her shoulders. Oh, she was practising on me! I could see that. She thought, I suppose, that I was proof against her; but how she would have tortured young Siddons, for example, in love with her, young, sensitive, chivalrous, full of faith in the nobility of womanhood. Yes, Kinaitsky understood. He knew women. Fortunate man! He sent her a large sum of money, and told her to write to him when she was free. He had a big house fronting the Gulf. She turned Nikitos out to shift for himself, took charge of the house he had taken for them in the *Rue Paleologue*, and 'got through somehow,' as she put it. She was vague about this episode, which was not surprising. There was a certain art in the

Digitized by Google

way she broke off with 'Mr. Chief, you can understand I was glad. . . .' and rose to ring for tea. 'Yes,' she said, when she came back, 'and then I found myself free to—to do something.'

"'Something, as you told me, I would not approve of?' I suggested. She broke into a smile and put her hand caressingly on my arm.

"'Don't be cross,' she whispered, sweetly. 'I've had a rotten time, Mr. Chief. You know everything's been against me from the first.'

"And while I sat there looking out over the golden mist of the river and succumbing to the magic of her voice, her presence, and the romantic glamour of her destiny, she began to hum an old air, watching me with a faint, derisive smile. 'Do you know that song?' she asked, and began to sing the words.

"'*Ah! Toncouton!*
Mo connin toi;
To semble Morico:
Y 'a pas savon
Qui assez blanc
Pour laver to la peau.'"

"'Where did you hear that?' I asked, for I knew it, a Creole song.

"'My mother,' she said, quietly and sadly. 'Now do you understand? I could never be like other girls, Mr. Chief.' And she began again:

Digitized by Google

"'Quand blancs la yo donne yo bal
To pas capable aller
Comment t'a vaillant giabal
Toi qui l'aime briller!'"

"'That's me, now,' she said. 'I'm Toucouton after all. Well, I must make the best of it.' And she sat there, musing, with her hand on my arm.

"'And your father—how is he?' I asked, to change the subject, for I was moved. An expression came into her face which reminded me of him, an expression of grave exaltation and secular raptness.

"'Oh,' she said, 'he is developing his properties. There are many difficulties he did not expect. M. Kinaitsky has promised his assistance. They are having trouble with another company. And the *Osmanli* needs overhauling. They are talking of building a dry-dock.'

"The tea was brought out on the balcony by a menial in blue and silver livery with white silk stockings, his beautifully manicured hands arranging the service in front of her. Artemisia did not reply for a moment as she busied herself with pouring out the tea. She had put on a *peignoir* of raw yellow silk covered with heavy gold thread embroidery, a barbaric thing that must have cost a hundred pounds at least. Round her neck was a fine chain of platinum holding a large sapphire. Her soft dark hair

Digitized by Google

was fastened with a massive comb of silver. On her arm were a dozen bracelets of heavy gold. There was no need to ask about Kinaitsky. Infatuated! She nodded as much. Very rich. Tobacco estates. Selling his crop in London now. She rose and came back with a photograph in a large silver frame.

"Well, he was an improvement upon M. Nikitos. Not old either, as I had for some reason imagined. Forty-five, I suppose; a solid, hook-nosed individual with the expensive, well-groomed air we associate with art-dealers. Fine eyes. I put down the picture and sipped my tea. This was all very well, but she had not asked me to come and see her simply to show off, surely.

"'And you've called me all the way from Glasgow to see some pretty clothes?' I asked. She looked hard at me for a moment and then dropped her eyes and smiled. She spoke, and in her voice there was the peculiar bell-like resonance I remarked the first time I heard her pronounce her name.

"'No, Mr. Chief,' she said, 'I have a favour to ask. A great favour. Will you do something for me? You did like me a little, you know.'

"'Oh, are you sure of that?' I enquired, coldly, and she nodded with a sudden rapturous vivacity. I dare say she was. Very little of that nature escapes a woman who exists chiefly by her temperament. I

Digitized by Google

had been sentimental on the cliff and begged her to use me. Well, I was still young enough to feel a thrill because a pretty woman appealed to me, because I had been singled out for that delicate honour. I did what any of you would have done. I consented. And then she told me hurriedly what she wanted me to do. I was . . . yes, this was the man. I understood, eh? She had written him from Saloniki. No answer. He did not know she was in London. She could not go, did not want to go for that matter. It was all over for ever. But it was his child. If I went to him, told him I had come from out there and had seen her . . . eh? She wanted him to take the child, later, and bring him up. As an Englishman. And I was to come back and tell her what he said.

"And there I was, a respectable, sea-faring person, flying through London in a taxi-cab on a wild-goose chase at the behest of a girl who was rapturously sure I had liked her a little! It was an adventure which disproves the old proverb again. I found myself being carried northward, along streets of an intolerable meanness, past huge vulgar stores, among clanging street-cars and plunging motor-buses. I looked at the address—'Mr. Florian Kelly, 6 Kentish Studios, Kentish Town N. E.' This was Kentish Town. We swung round a corner by a huge terra-

Digitized by Google

cotta subway station, shot up a drab street, turned into a narrow lane, and stopped opposite a tall green wooden wall. I got out, rather dazed, and telling the man to wait, looked about for an entrance. There was a door in the wall with the words 'Kentish Studios' over a bell handle. But the bell handle hung slack and I ventured to open the door. Evidently the taxi-driver had been there before, for he said: 'You'll find Number Six on the right, Sir.' I went in.

"It was a long garden surrounded by high black buildings and very quiet. The wet summer had encouraged everything to grow, and the whole place was a rank green jungle. In the centre stood a statue, a nymph stained green and brown with the rain pouring through the foliage overhead. The rank grasses hung over the path and there was a damp smell. I walked along until I came to Number Six. It was one of a number of apartments in a long, low building with large skylights in the roof, a large window and a transom over each door. A fly-blown card over the bell-push announced Mr. Florian Kelly. As I pressed the button I heard a shrill laugh from one of the other studios. I was not surprised to find that the bell did not ring. I rapped with my stick, a fine manly voice remarked 'Oh, damn!' and there was a sound of footsteps. And then the door opened

Digitized by Google

about six inches and a young man with a keen dark face and wearing a calico overall put his head out.

"'Is it very important?' he asked, impatiently. 'I've got a model, you know.'

"'Yes, very important,' I said. 'I have a cab waiting.'

"He opened the door and I went in. It was one large room with a little scullery behind, a studio with a four-post bed in one corner, an easel in another, and a young woman in extreme deshabille, hastily covered with a travelling rug, seated on a dais near the window. On the walls were the usual studies, of street scenes mostly, and trees reflected in still water. On the easel was a half-finished poster for some theatrical announcement, a woman in a tragic attitude holding a knife and clutching her throat. Mr. Florian Kelly looked hard at me. I said:

"'You used to know a Miss Macedoine, I believe.'

"'Yes, to my cost,' he retorted, sharply. 'Miss Bailey, will you go and have your tea? Come back in an hour, say five sharp.' She stepped down and went to the back of the studio, and Mr. Kelly pulled a green curtain across behind her. 'It's very inconvenient you know,' he said, 'the first decent day I've had for weeks. I don't suppose you realize what light means to an artist.'

"'I was sent by Miss Macedoine,' I began and he

Digitized by Google

interrupted me: 'Oh, she's got you, too, has she? Well, look here my friend, I don't know who you are or what particular hold she's obtained over you, but if you take my advice you'll get out while the getting's good. And I can tell you this before you go any further, she's had all the money she's going to get from me.'

"'Well,' I said, 'you needn't get excited about it. I haven't come to ask you for money.'

"'Oh, I'm not excited,' he responded, grimly. 'I'm in full possesssion of all my faculties. One needs them when she's round. Where is she now? In the cab waiting to hear the result of the interview?'

"'No,' I said; 'she's residing in Saloniki now.'

"'Saloniki! Snakes! She's a wonder! Why, I understood the money she had from me and some others was to start her father in an oil business in Egypt. Are *you* in the oil business? Or are you her father?'

"'No, only a friend,' I said.

"'Oh, only a friend. Poor chap! Well, that's all I was when she—wait a bit, will you? Have a peg?' And he brought out a bottle and some glasses. While we were drinking, Miss Bailey came out in her walking costume, and looking pleasantly at each of us in turn, went out to get her tea. When

Digitized by Google

the door closed, Mr. Kelly flung back the curtain and sat down on the bed, indicating an easy chair.

"'Look here,' said he, lighting a cigarette and throwing the package toward me. 'I'm not grousing you know. I tell you frankly, I was infatuated with her. I neglected my work. I spent my money. I wanted to marry her. She's that sort. Drives you mad. But she wouldn't. Nothing doing. She's like that. She makes you feel like one of these old knights. You want to protect her from the cruel world. You want to fling everything you've got at her feet, lie down and let her walk over you. Well, take my advice and don't do it!'

"I thought it as well to interrupt him here and give him a more correct estimate of my part in the affair. He smoked his cigarette out and flung it in the fireplace.

"'Oh,' he said. 'I see. Well, all I can say is you are very lucky. But you're mistaken about me, my friend. I'm not to be bled. I'm not grousing. I don't even regret the money she cost me, though it would be very useful to me now, when I'm driven to do posters instead of my real work. I believe it does a man good to go off his head sometimes about a woman. What I feel so disgusted about is the lies she told me. That's one of her characteristics, you know. She really believes them herself at the time.

Digitized by Google

She's imaginative, if you like. Spins the most circumstantial terradiddles. For instance, how do you know her story is true? Have you seen . . . eh?'

"'No,' I admitted. 'I haven't.' He laughed and nursed his knee, rocking to and fro.

"'She's clever!' he said, smiling. 'Mind, you're not to be blamed at all. As far as I can gather, you have nothing to regret. But if you get to Saloniki again, give her my love, and tell her I'm too poor, too busy, and too wise to be led into a mess like that again. I can't be angry with her because I'm so grateful to her for not taking me at my word, and hanging like a mill-stone on my neck for ever. Phew! The thought of it makes me cold all over! And yet. . . .' And he held out his hand for the cigarettes. 'Isn't she beautiful? Eh? Isn't she wonderful? Man, I tell you I used to feel like crying sometimes, she was so lovely! Saloniki, eh? Well, she'll go far. She has the temperament and the talent. I wish her luck.'

"'I am convinced,' I said, 'that you are taking a mistaken view of her. For instance, I certainly gathered that she was in love with you and believes you to be. . . .' He stood up suddenly.

"'In love with me? She may have been. I dare-say she can convince herself she's in love with all of

Digitized by Google

us. I told you she's imaginative. In love with me? Golly, I don't blame her. I nearly went out of my mind about her. There isn't a folly I didn't commit for—how long was it?—say six weeks. I shall never forget it. But a man in my position can't afford many of these episodes. They're too strenuous. I've got to work. If you'll excuse me, your cab is waiting and Miss Bailey will be back in a few minutes. She costs me three shillings an hour. You see,' he added, smiling, 'she's not in love with me! Love! My friend, the love those sort of women inspire never got a man anywhere. You can't escape it if it comes your way, it's true. You can only trust to the good Lord to let you off lightly. But flight is the bravest course. You have to be very rich and very strong in character if you are going in for that sort of thing. And this girl especially, because she does it by instinct. She works on you and gradually builds up in your mind an ideal woman who does duty for her. Oh, I know! She's a wonder. For instance,' and Mr. Kelly turned to me and held his index finger against my breast, 'why does she send you to me? Is she in want of money? Is she in danger? No. If she was, she knows I couldn't do anything for her if I would. She's doing it to impress you, to play up to the imaginary woman you've in your mind. As for this idea of sending a kid over here to be

Digitized by Google

brought up an Englishman—phew! She's read something like that in a book, I'll bet. Well, here's Miss Bailey. You must excuse me. If you're in London next month, come and see my show at the New Gallery. And Sunday nights at supper. How I envy you going to the Mediterranean. My dream . . . Good-bye.'

"Well," said Mr. Spenlove, after a moment of silent reflection, "I came out of the Kentish Studios and climbed into my cab feeling very much as though I had been skinned. That terrible young man seemed to have left me without a single illusion about myself. I have discovered since that he is recognized now as a painter of unusual power. He is making a name. But to me he will always be the merciless analyst of human emotion. He had the bitterness of those who escape love. He spared neither himself, nor me, nor the girl. He almost frightened me with the accuracy of his diagnosis. As the cab sped along the Tottenham Court Road on its way back to the Strand I wondered what he would have thought of Captain Macedoine himself, that master of illusion who was always playing up to the imaginary being one had in one's mind. I suppose creative artists see through each other's tricks. An artist is one who imposes upon our legitimate aspirations.

Digitized by Google

"I paid off the cab in the Strand and walked into the hotel. Men and women in evening dress were alighting for early theatre-dinners. I sent up my name as before. I had no very clear idea what I wanted to do. Oh, of course I wanted to see her again. I had no scruples. She was more interesting, more her father's daughter, than ever, to me now. As Florian Kelly had said, she was a wonder, but she could do me no harm. She was an artist, let us say, and as such I wished to see her at work. Beyond that there was another feeling, a sort of fatherly affection—a silly notion of protecting her from herself. But that young devil of a painter had divined that, too, and I sat down to wait, ashamed, amused, astonished. I recalled the conversations we had had on the ship and on the cliff, the subtle implication in her voice, the pity she had inspired in me by the contemplation of her disastrous fate. I had put my arm round her, given her my address, behaved like a sentimental old fool. And all the time her brain had been working, weighing, comparing, judging chances, and leading me on. But had she done so? Oh, women are wonderful! Their emotional imperturbability defies analysis. They weep, confess, cajole, attack, reproach, renounce, and at the end of it all you are as baffled as ever. Their souls are like those extraordinary bronze mirrors one

Digitized by Google

sees nowadays. You look and see a picture. You go off in amused annoyance, your head over your shoulder, and see another picture. And when you come back again determined to be fair and candid, you see yet another picture, or perhaps a mere shining blank, a dazzling and expensive enigma. I knew all this. I saw all this; and yet I lingered. I was unable to resist the piquant pleasure of watching the girl, of occupying the position of confidant. I understood how the obscure husband of a celebrated theatrical star must feel without experiencing his grim regret. And when the page, in his blue and silver, with his miraculously brushed hair, and his expression of almost unearthly cleanliness, carried me upward once more, I had attained the right mood again for meeting these adventures in vicarious emotion. After all, for those of us to whom the avenues of fame, of wealth, of the domestic virtues are closed, there remains an occasional ramble in the romantic bye-ways of life. One may still meet young knights in shining armour, haughty kings and queens, and women with unfathomable eyes engaged upon mysterious quests. We can always run back to our old mother, the sea, and restore our souls upon her comfortable bosom.

"And I found myself again in that palatial apartment. There was no one there apparently. The

Digitized by Google

page had closed the door and left me. I turned at the sound of a voice and saw her standing in the doorway of the next room, a figure in pale, shimmering gold, holding back a *portière* of heavy dark blue velvet. Holding it back for me to enter, and watching me with the old, derisive, questioning smile.

"'You have come back very quickly,' she said, going over to a lounge and patting a chair beside it.

"'Why did you send me to him?' I demanded, good-humouredly. She lay down on the lounge and turned toward me, her head on her palm.

"'What did he say?' she asked, and in her voice was that peculiar timbre of which I have already spoken, a delicate quality of tone that made one think of bells at a distance, a hint of fairy lands forlorn. I could understand how, to a young man in love with her, that exquisite modulation of tone would drive him mad.

"'He was not sympathetic,' I replied. 'He seemed to jump to the conclusion you didn't really need any assistance from him. Disclaims any responsibility, in fact.'

"'And you believed him?' she murmured.

"'He was very frank,' I answered. 'He spared neither you nor himself. He was good enough to warn me against your tricks.'

"'And you believed him?' she repeated with

Digitized by Google

passionate intensity, her eyes burning bright, her teeth closing over the full red lip. 'Men always believe another man about a woman.'

"'No, not altogether,' I protested. 'But he said you told him lies.'

"She lay there looking at me for a while without speaking and then she got up slowly, yawned with a deliberate gesture of extreme gracefulness, and shrugged her shoulders.

"'And *that's* all it amounted to!' she remarked with a smile of disdain. 'He adored me, he said. Never, never would he forget. I was the only girl he ever really loved! He wanted me to marry him and live in that—that place you saw. And when I told him what my mother was, he nearly went mad, and wanted to kill me and commit suicide. Did he tell you that?'

"'No,' I admitted. 'He didn't become quite so confidential as that. But he accused you of faithlessness.'

"'Me! How could I be faithful to a lunatic? I had to run away from him. He wasn't safe. . . .'

"'And what do you want me to do now?' I enquired. 'You must know, my dear, that I can't stay away from the ship. We sail in a week.'

"'Oh,' she said, coming up to me and putting her hands on my shoulders so that the warm perfume of

Digitized by Google

her body assailed me. 'To be my friend. A girl in my position, Mr. Chief, she needs to have a friend. I thought—well, I was mistaken. I thought he would have been different, a clever man like him. But they are all the same, all the same.' And her hands dropped.

"'I said I'd be your friend,' I protested, 'but you didn't seem to think me worth while.'

"'Always,' she whispered, regarding me, 'never mind what happens?'

"'Yes!' I said, putting my arm round her. 'Tell me whatever you like. I'll always believe you.' She came close to me, and looking down she whispered in that sweet, resonant voice that made one think of distant chimes, 'For that I shall always love you.'"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI

"SOFT!" ejaculated Mr. Spenlove, looking round into the darkness and feeling for a fresh cigarette. "You have said it. I was soft. But when you come to think of it, what else could I have been? I am confessing myself before you. What did you want me to do? Invent a tale? In which I play a noble and manly part? A red-blooded story, as they say? A story in which I rescue a virtuous maiden from a gross plutocrat and marry her, the light dying away on a close-up picture of me bending over her while she holds up a replica of Jack's angel child? Why, even Jack would not endorse a yarn like that. I have a very clear memory of him suddenly spoiling the idyllic peace of a summer afternoon in the Mediterranean by dashing his magazine down on the deck and uttering a profane objurgation against what he called 'muck.' We were sliding blissfully along a cobalt-blue floor, a floor without a ripple as far as the eye could see. And there wasn't a woman or a baby, that we were aware of, within three or four

Digitized by Google

hundred miles. Peace, perfect peace. And Jack, instead of realizing the extreme felicity of the actual moment, had been devouring a red-blooded story in which one of these dashing, daring, clean-cut merchant-captains had saved a beautiful virgin from a rascally foreigner. There was a picture of her being saved. Splendid! Specially written for people who love the sea!

"No, I am confessing myself before you. Truth can be served in many ways, and this is mine. The fortunate being whose characters consist of homogeneous heroism and are compact of courage seem to elude my scrutiny. And even when I meet a clever and sensible genius like Florian Kelly, I cannot honestly say I admire him unreservedly. He gets on. He succeeds. He arrives. But people who arrive with the convenient punctuality of a railway timetable do not interest me. They lack the weaknesses which make men fascinating to my amateur fancy.

"And so I am prepared to admit that she did what, in a previous moment of softness, I had asked her to do. She used me. She used me to feed her craving for influence over men, her inherited and insatiable desire for building up romantic and glamorous memories. Florian Kelly regarded her efforts with admiring exasperation, regretting

Digitized by Google

their interference with his own designs upon our susceptibilities. Mrs. Evans had made a commotion like a bird defending her nest. Young Siddons had been bowled over, as he phrased it, and offered her something of no real value to an artist—a tender and inexperienced loyalty. Such women are episodic. Their lives are a string of jewels of varying value connected by a thread of no value at all. And I confess that to me the shame of being used by her was not apparent. She, the leading lady, selected me for a slightly higher rôle than that of a super in the play, and I found the position singularly agreeable. I was afflicted at the time with no rash desire to supplant the principal protagonists. It was a piquant and persuasive proof of the infinite variety of human relationships that she could bring me to meet the wealthy and powerful individual over whom she had cast the spell of her radiant personality. I mean the gross and licentious plutocrat of the red-blooded story. He came in as I was standing, hat in hand, ready to go, and he heard me described as 'an old friend, who knew her father years ago.' Which was true, though I was not sure Captain Macedoine would have endorsed the statement. Mr. Kinaitsky came forward with his hat on, removed it and one of his gloves, and shook hands with a courtly gesture. He looked older than his photograph. The fine

Digitized by Google

gray hair fluffed out over the ears, the bushy brows shading voluptuous eyes, the swarthy cheeks and flexible lips gave him the air of a prosperous impresario. He brought in with him, however, an atmosphere of affairs. He nodded politely to the girl's explanation, patted her gently on the shoulder, and passed on to his room. Returning for a cigarette, and offering me the box, he remarked that he hoped I would excuse him as he was dining out and had to dress at once. He had had a fatiguing day in the city. Did I know London? A fine day. Would I excuse him once more? Turning to the girl, who was sitting on the arm of a chair, he took her chin in his hand and favoured her with a swift, masculine, appraising glance. She gave him one of her delicious, derisive smiles and whispered something, her eyes flickering toward me for an instant. He patted her cheek and turned away, remarking, 'Of course if she wished.' He would not be in till late. 'Amuse yourself, *ma chere*,' he added, and bowing slightly to me, went away to his bath.

"There was something odd to me in this, but I found it was a characteristic of his infatuation to see as little of her as possible. He never took her anywhere and he never brought any of his friends to the hotels where they stayed. She had absolute fredom. He gave her whatever she demanded. But

Digitized by Google

she must not bother him. And while she was absent getting a cloak, I looked around the room turning this unusual idiosyncrasy over in my mind. There was a smoking table in one corner and I observed a *tarbush* on the lower shelf. Of course we ourselves often wear a fez while smoking; but the sight of it gave me a cue. For you must understand that, the normal Anglo-Saxon temperament, there is necessarily something disturbing about such an attitude toward a woman. Assuming the infatuation. And it occurred to me that herein lay the source of an unidentified impression which he had made upon me as he stood regarding the girl. And I saw as well the reason why she had harped so on needing 'a friend.' I looked at the *tarbush*, glowing bright red among the cedar-wood caskets and—yes, a *narghileh* stood in the corner behind, the amber mouth-piece thrust into the coils of its own barbarically decorated tube. This man, for all his suave courtesy and western polish, would be the inheritor of oriental ideas. His attitude would be the attitude of the *pasha* on his divan. He would not understand my sentimental affection for Artemisia, or Florian Kelly's panic-stricken rush from blind passion to a callous, worldly caution. In short, he was equipped precisely as Florian Kelly said we ought to be equipped before we embark upon an

Digitized by Google

episode with such a woman. He had wealth and he had wisdom, not only the wisdom of the world, but the inherited sagacity of orientalized ancestors, the bearded owners of extensive domestic establishments.

"Yes, he gave her absolute freedom, and demanded only absolute obedience. I could not help wondering how Mrs. Evans would have regarded such a proposition, and this led me to reflect that Jack's equipment was too primitive, too simple. We Westerners do not seem to prosper in such enterprises. We are hampered by our excessive idealism. Our training does not fit us for the rôle of pasha. We are unable to compass the art of intelligent infatuation. And I confess that at this close view of the understructure of a polygamous career, I was weak enough to feel scandalized. When she told me casually, as we sat at dinner, that Mr. Kinaitsky had a fiancée, a rich young Jewess in Saloniki, my appetite was affected. I felt that he was, well, a little beyond my range. Any faint notions I may have had of experimenting in that direction myself faded from view. Even the position of friend, of being a sort of deputy *amant-de-coeur*, was fraught with grave danger to my emotional stability. Very curious, I can assure you, to be suddenly apprised of the extreme fragility of one's moral fibre!

Digitized by Google

"And the trouble with us is that we are usually unable to make out a very strong case for our side of the question. We point with a fine gesture toward the severely beautiful figure of Virtue, and the woman, following our instructions, looks and sees Mrs. Evans and the angel child. We point ecstatically to Love, and she shrugs her shoulders as the figure of young Siddons emerges, with his boyish mind choked with racial and social prejudices, his muzzy, impossible idealism, and his empty purse.

"And mind you, she was naïve enough or clever enough to play up to the highest possible estimate of such a situation. When I asked her how long this was going to last, she was charmingly vague and pensive. It was part of the bargain, I suppose, to furnish the necessary sentiment. And when I persisted, and wished to know what she would do then, she sighed and hoped I would always be her friend. Well, she was right about that. I was her friend until the time came, not so long after, when her need of friends ceased, when her homeless and undisciplined spirit was transported to a sphere uncomplicated, let us hope, by our terrestrial deficiencies. And I like to think that this friendship of ours, unsullied by conventional gallantry, was for her a source of comfort, and sustained her at times when the flames of exaltation burned low, and she was

Digitized by Google

oppressed by the shadow of her destiny. But of course, this may be only one of my occidental illusions.

"At the time, however, it seemed as though for me the adventure was already nothing more than an intriguing memory. From time to time I received postcards written from Paris, Munich, Vienna, Buda-Pesth, Prague, and Constantinople. And then, after a long silence, a brief letter telling me that she was living in an apartment, near the *Esky Djouma*, turning up out of the *Rue Eqnatia*, but that I was to write to the *Rue Paleologue*, and she would be sure to get it. Her father was much preoccupied with financial affairs. She wanted to know if I were coming to Saloniki. I was to be sure and let her know.

"Well, there was nothing inherently impossible in my appearing in Saloniki. I had been there in the *Manola* more than once with coal. At that time, however, we were busily shipping our mineral wealth, at cut-rate prices, to Italy, and the voyages alternated between Genoa and Ancona, calling at Tunis for iron ore to keep Krupp's gun-shops at Essen working full time. All three places were too far away for week-ending at Saloniki, and the charter was for a year. I wrote to her more than once. But I am no correspondent. I am unable to maintain the

Digitized by Google

to-me unnatural mental contortions of translating a mood into a literary form. I can tell you—yes; but I regard with envy those fortunate souls who 'pour themselves out' as we say, upon paper. Somehow or other, I am not to be poured out. And so our correspondence did not flourish with that tropical luxuriance which is so much appreciated by the world when we are dead and unable to protect ourselves. But I did not forget. I shall never forget that romantic encounter, the sweet, resonant voice coming across the rose-shaded supper-table, the exquisite face with the radiant and questing, derisive smile.

"And then, with the matter-of-fact abruptness of sea-faring, I was informed that we were to proceed to the Bristol Channel and load steam coal for Saloniki. Jack was concerned at this, for it meant a longer voyage, and Mrs. Evans was in an interesting condition, as he put it. Jack had settled down. He was worried, of course, but his period of eccentric uxoriousness was over. He sighed occasionally for a 'shore job,' but he acknowledged the sense of my argument that he would be a fool to quit. He was already looking forward to the distant day when he could retire. Had saved a couple of hundred pounds and put it into oil shares, which were going up. His conversation contained less of Madeline and more of possible profits. In fact, Madeline disap-

Digitized by Google

peared, and was supplanted by a sober institution known as 'the Missus.' He had forgotten 'the gel,' I imagined, but it transpired that even upon him she had left her mark. On the voyage out, during a conversation about our probable port of loading, he suddenly expressed a curiosity as to what became o' that gel? What did I suppose? For I had not scrupled to keep my relations with Captain Macedoine's daughter to myself. I said I couldn't imagine. Probably married by this time. Ah! said Jack. Best thing, too. What was her name now? He'd forgotten. Ah! Fancy givin' a child a name like that! And another thing. We'd be able to have a look at the Anglo-Hellenic Development Company. See what we'd missed, eh? Jack gave a fat chuckle. Oil for him! Something that was quoted on the Stock Exchange. Six per cent. and safe as houses. Safer! Tenants were so destructive nowadays, his father-in-law told him. For the workhouse master was an owner of small houses in a quiet way. A warm man. Had five hundred in these here oil shares. And so on.

"No, I kept my romantic behaviour to myself. Jack would not understand my interest in 'that gel.' Before we left Cardiff I had written to the *Rue Paleologue* to say that we were on our way, and gave the probable date of our arrival. And while we were

Digitized by Google

on our way I turned over in my mind my reasons for writing to the *Rue Paleologue*. Middle age demands reasons. Well, I was hungry for sensations. In my youth I had a great ambition to seek adventure. Fate took me into a world of machine-belts, harsh language, and industrial dullness. I escaped from that into sea-life believing that I should find adventure. The greatest mistake imaginable! But I realized that it was not adventure I really craved after all—only sensations. A difficult case to prescribe for, I admit. One has to train oneself to perceive, to become aware of their proximity. I suppose this really is what used to pass as culture—the adventures of one's soul among the doubtful masterpieces which throng the dusty junk-shop we call the World. I played with the notion that in the *Rue Paleologue* I might come upon an authentic piece.

"I confess, though, that I had a certain diffidence about going ashore and calling, as we say, in a perfectly normal manner, upon Captain Macedoine. I really felt I had not sufficient excuse. And when we were able to go ashore, and I stepped across what is now satirically known as the *Place de la Liberté*, I compromised. I went into the *Odéon*, a lofty café on the corner, to have a drink and come to a decision. It was full. At the far end a big burly individual in

Digitized by Google

a frock coat and a fez, with a silver star on his breast, was standing on a chair and delivering a harangue. A patriot. Waiters rushed to and fro bearing trays loaded with glasses. The murmur of conversation rose and fell around me. Here and there among the excited proletariat sat dignified old gentlemen with drooping moustaches sipping mastic, munching caviar sandwiches, and reading newspapers. And while I was rolling a cigarette I caught sight, at a corner table, of a familiar figure, a figure in a short shabby overcoat with a fur collar and a fur cap on his head, writing rapidly on a large sheet of the café paper. It was M. Nikitos, the lieutenant of the Anglo-Hellenic Development Company. I had forgotten him, to tell the truth. Artemisia gave me the impression that he had dropped out of consideration. I was mistaken, it appears. He had not forgotten me, however. In due course he looked in my direction, looked again with attention, and I saw recognition come into his unprepossessing features. He rose up, gathered together his writing materials, and came over to my table. We shook hands. I invited him to have a drink, which he accepted with alacrity. He still had the air of a dirty virtuoso. He was good enough to say he remembered me perfectly in Ipsilon, of the *Manola*, ah, yes. Well, he was doing extremely well, having taken up international

Digitized by Google

journalism. Was employed on the *Phos*, of which I might have heard. He didn't look as though international journalism had done much for him. His long French boots were burst at the sides and his linen was far from fresh. To my enquiry as to the prosperity of the great enterprise he raised his eyebrows and shoulders and exhibited a pair of unwashed palms, his forearms resting on the marble table. In time, in time, they would achieve success. But the conditions were highly unfavourable to financial operations. There was great political unrest. Revolution was in the air. Eventually Liberty would be triumphant, which was glorious, but in the meanwhile, finance languished. At present even a very sound scheme for building a dock was hung up for lack of adequate support from responsible capitalists.

"'And Captain Macedoine—is he still in business?' I asked, casually. He opened his eyes and drew down the corners of his lips. Very sad. Confined to his apartment. He, M. Nikitos, the only friend faithful to him. Deserted by his daughter even. But still planning for the development of Macedonia. Colossal brain still working. Adverse circumstances, aided by Grünbaum's company, preventing success.

"This was surprising. Deserted by his daughter? I suggested to M. Nikitos that he must be under a

Digitized by Google

misapprehension. He looked at me gloomily and shook his head. She had gone off, deluding her father with a story of marriage. He himself knew how much there was in that. Certainly she had got money from someone—but whom? Sooner or later he would discover. He had his own interest in that affair. After he had done everything for them when they first came to Saloniki, to show him the door. . . . When he did discover her and her lover, we would see. Straitened circumstances had prevented him from doing anything so far. But wait.

"'Why, what would you do?' I asked, idly. The notion of this penurious little humbug getting in the way of a serene and powerful polygamist like Kinaitsky was entertaining. He looked down between his knees, presenting the crown of his greasy *tarbush* at my breast as though he were about to butt me. He mumbled something. It was so preposterous I pretended I had misunderstood him.

"'Oh, come!' I said. 'You must be joking. You can't interfere with anybody like that. She has a right to do as she pleases. Why bother about her? I happen to know she is very happy.'

"He looked up at me sharply, and pulled his mouth to one side as though he were making a face at me.

Digitized by Google

"'Happy?' he echoed. '*You* know? Then it is with you. . . . It explains all those English clothes she had when I saw her at the White Tower. She was in a box with the family who live next door. Madame Sarafov. . . .' He stared at me with his mouth fallen open, his whole body motionless. He gave me the impression of a man perched upon a perilous precipice, uncertain whether the next movement would plunge him to destruction.

"'No,' I said, shaking my head, 'you are making a mistake. But I know.' He moved slightly, leaning forward.

"'You know where she lives?' he muttered. 'This place where she is very happy?'

"'No, I can't say I do,' I replied. 'You can hardly expect me to tell you, either, even if I knew, after what you said just now. Of course,' I went on, 'you spoke in hyperbole, but it would be scarcely the act of a gentleman to distress a woman by forcing yourself upon her.'

"'Hyperbole?' he repeated, staring at me as though fascinated. 'Gentleman . . . distress? . . she gave the Sarafov girl some English clothes. I never imagined for a moment. . . . Incredible *dénouement*.' He looked suddenly discouraged. 'Then you have her in England.' A gleam of understanding came into his eyes. 'You

Digitized by Google

have brought her back here? Well, do you know what she will do, now you have finished with her? She will——'

"He stopped as I put up my hand. I said 'She is not my mistress, I tell you.' He brought his hand down with a crash on the table, so that the glasses jumped and the ink-bottle slipped off and emptied itself on the floor. One or two people looked at him, but most of the excitement centred round the robust person with the silver star, whose speech was being applauded with a tremendous amount of guttural approval. Nikitos stood up, towering over me in a threatening manner.

"'Then who took her from me?' he snarled, 'who gave her the English clothes? You. . . .' He sat down again and held up a menacing finger. 'You think, you imagine, that the destruction of my hopes is to be accepted with what you call philosophy? Well, yes. . . . I am philosophical——' he stooped without taking his eyes from mine and replaced the ink-bottle on the table. 'Listen, Monsieur. I am a pure man. In my travels, in Egypt, in Turkey, and in Europe, I keep myself—you understand—immaculate. Because I have here'—he tapped his dark forehead where the large flat black eyebrows were like symmetrical charcoal smudges—'I have here an undoubted am-

Digitized by Google

bition. In Egypt I was poor—very poor—very, very poor. Captain Macedoine, whom I met in my business, extends to me his generosity. To me, a poor interpreter in a firm of exporters, he offers his friendship. I confide to him my ambition, my dreams. My *métier*, I tell him, is politics; but of what use without the financial power? You comprehend, Monsieur? For me it was impossible to associate with a *demi-vierge*. I express myself to Captain Macedoine with great strength, for it is my business in Alexandria to introduce these ladies to the captains and the passengers. Captain Macedoine gives me his entire confidence. He tells me he has a daughter. When he is appointed to a position in Ipsilon he is good enough to obtain for me also a subordinate appointment. He brings his daughter from England. We are affianced. We come to Saloniki. I secure for them a good house, most suitable, in the *Rue Paleologue*. What then? Mademoiselle is *distrait*. She desires me to wait, a month, two, three. I do not understand, but it is as Mademoiselle wishes. And then Captain Macedoine becomes very ill. A terrible misfortune! I work. I think. I sacrifice myself. Mademoiselle is suddenly no longer *distrait*. She commands me to leave the house—I, Stepan Nikitos! You understand, Monsieur, that I have had much to bear.

Digitized by Google

The *Osmanli*, our vessel, entering the harbour, is struck by another vessel, and sinks. Only her mast remains to see above the water. I have to go to Constantinople to get the insurance. Our concessions in Macedonia are no longer secure. And Captain Macedoine too ill to be informed! I struggle against those misfortunes. I am compelled to accept a position on the *Phos* to earn the rent of my poor room and a little food. I go to Mademoiselle and I find she is gone. Her father receives me as always, with affection; but he grieves to tell me his daughter is married. Well, Monsieur, I have told you that, in Alexandria, I was of necessity a friend of the *demi-vierge*, and I am familiar with the significant change in the tone of these women when they have secured a wealthy lover. When Mademoiselle commanded me to leave the house I was not deceived. It was for me the destruction of my hopes and the birth of a resolution.'

"He held his finger horizontal, pointing at my breast, as though his resolution was to take careful aim and shoot. 'Which nothing can kill,' he added, with calmness, and folded his arms on the table.

"Now what struck me about these revelations of M. Nikitos, made across the sloppy marble-topped table of the *Odéon*, was what I may call their pre-

Digitized by Google

occupied sincerity. He conveyed the impression of being perfectly sincere and yet thinking of something else at the same time. And there was another peculiar thing about it. Although he addressed himself to me with exaggerated directness, I could not rid myself of the conviction that I knew no more of what he was really up to than if I were in a theatre watching him on the stage. For, remember, all the sounds, the cries of the fanatics, the guttural ebullience of the burly person with the silver star, the article for the *Phos*, half written in a spidery Greek script, the whole of the jangling uproar of the city, was within this man's cognizance, while to me it was a mere senseless cacophony. His assumption of lonely despair was not borne out by the subtle air he had of being in with all these people who were chaffering among themselves and applauding the rhetorician with his silver star. And the upshot was that I grew very much afraid of this sinister, shrunken figure whose hopes had been destroyed, and who was nursing with extreme care a new-born resolution 'which nothing could kill.' His singular claim to purity only added to this alarm. One is scarcely reassured by hearing that a man is not only desperate but immaculate. And I did what most of us would do under the circumstances. I got up to go. M. Nikitos gathered his manuscript together, stuffed it

Digitized by Google

into his breast pocket and prepared to accompany me. As we came out upon the quay I turned to him.

"'Are you coming down to the ship?' The question seemed to bring his thoughts to a standstill.

"'The ship?' he repeated. 'Oh, no, Monsieur. Why should I go down to the ship? I will see you when you return.'

"'Now see here,' I said, touching him on the shoulder, 'you must get all that nonsense out of your head about Miss Macedoine. If she has treated you badly the decent thing to do is to forget it. You may not be the only one, you know.'

"'Forget it?' he asked, like an intelligent child, 'how can one forget it, Monsieur?'

"'What I mean is, you must not annoy her if you ever meet her.'

"'Annoy her?' he repeated in the same tone. 'I should not annoy. Our interview,' he added, reflectively, looking at his disintegrating boots, 'would not take up more than a few moments. Very short. To the point, as you say.' And he regarded me with amusement.

"I left him with a sudden gesture of impatience and he went off toward the offices of the *Phos*. Words broke out upon him like a rash: it was impossible to preserve one's credulity in the face of

Digitized by Google

his enigmatic fluency. Impossible to maintain a grasp upon common facts and homely eventualities. I walked on past the dock-buildings and came to the station. And I wondered where the *Rue Paleologue* might be. A cab-driver raised his whip as I halted, and moved slowly over to where I stood. He did not seem to have any clear ideas, but signified by a wealth of gesture that if I would get in he would find out. It was just dusk and I got in. We galloped away with a great deal of whip-cracking and noise of iron tires on the granite sets, past the *Odéon* again, and onward along the quays. I reflected upon the attitude Nikitos had taken up toward Artemisia, but I could arrive at no opinion. One has very little data for gauging the mentality of a highly sophisticated but immaculate being. And I still retained the impression that she, under the powerful protection of Kinaitsky, would stand in very little danger from the annoyance of a journalist on the *Phos*. Nevertheless, idealists who take pride in their purity are dangerous, because they are incalculable. It is the only hold we have on most people in these days of extreme personal liberty—the sad but inexorable fact that they are not immaculate. It captured my imagination in spite of my distaste for the man, this conception he had evoked of himself pursuing his way through the unnameable wickedness of Levantine

Digitized by Google

cities, yet bearing within an inviolable chastity. One felt there was something formidable in its mere existence, like vitriol, something not quite human, and therefore to be feared. It was like beholding a white-robed virgin with severe features bearing a palm amidst the groups of courtesans who were strolling along the quays, arm in arm, taking the air before engaging in the business of the evening.

"There was a new twist given to my thoughts when the carriage pulled up and the driver spoke to a couple of these girls who were walking mincingly along in their high-heeled shoes. Evidently inquiring the way. They regarded me with friendly approval, but they shook their heads over the *Rue Paleologue*. We were about to drive on when one of them put her hand to her head with a gesture of recollection. She spoke to the driver—a musical and resonant torrent of words. We drove on, past the great bulk of the Tour Blanche, on into the darkness.

"For the road here left the quay and began to wind between large houses embowered in trees. Those on the right faced the Gulf. No doubt in one of them Mr. Kinaitsky dwelt with his wealthy Hebrew bride. To the left could be seen avenues turning off. There was a great glare for a moment as we passed a building with tall windows– a factory of some sort. And

Digitized by Google

then, after following this road for some time, we turned up one of the avenues into deeper darkness and a silence broken only by the clink of the harness and the soft sound of hoof and tire on loam and leaves. At the head of this road the carriage stopped, and the driver pointed with his whip, repeating the word *Paleologue* to intimate that we were there.

"I paid him and moved across the road in the direction indicated, and found my foot striking a hard sidewalk beneath trees. It was very dark. Here and there a grid of light was thrown on the road from a partly shuttered window, or a pale glow would silhouette a woman sitting in a doorway. There were many houses and I did not know the number I wanted. I moved slowly along, hesitating to ask. You see, I was not sure. And the language difficulty troubled me. These people spoke no intelligible word as far as I was concerned. But I was constrained to pause at length, and seeing some seated forms, outside a doorway in the darkness, I began by asking if this were really the *Rue Paleologue*. A tall woman rose from her chair and said 'Oui, Monsieur,' and I found myself in the dim light from a spacious tiled vestibule, floundering in the middle of whispered explanations. Their eyes seemed very large in the darkness, and their forms tall and ghostly. Suddenly one of the girls stepped into the light and

Digitized by Google

I saw the broad, flat beauty of the Southern Slav. She stood there regarding me, her hands behind her, her chin raised. And then she remarked in a hoarse and musical tone, 'You English?' I said in some surprise that I was and asked if they spoke it. She said 'Why, sure,' and we all laughed.

"Surprising? Well, yes, it was. Because the intonation was not English at all, but American. It was like reading a book in French and Italian and coming suddenly upon a sentence written in italics, in one's own tongue. The very isolation of it, adrift in a waste of partially intelligible expressions, doubles the luminous emphasis of it. I looked at them in astonishment, and they looked at each other and laughed again. And then they led the way into the house.

"They were very much alike. That is to say, they resembled the portraits of the same handsome woman at the ages of thirteen, eighteen, and thirty-five. They were mother and daughters. And when I said I was looking for a Miss Macedoine, they uttered exclamations.

"'Her father—he lives in the next house,' they said.

"'I have heard,' I remarked, 'of a family named —what was it?—Sarafov.' And they nodded with animation. 'You got it,' said the elder girl. 'This is mother, Mrs. Sarafov. I'm Pollyni, and my sister

Digitized by Google

here is Olga. Did Miss Macedoine tell you about it?'

"'No,' I said, 'I heard in a round-about way. But tell me, where is she?'

"They looked at each other. Mrs. Sarafov spoke.

"'Are you the gentleman on the ship . . . ?' I nodded. 'Well, I guess we can tell you. I suppose you know how she's fixed.' I nodded again. 'Well, she's got an apartment in the town. If you like we'll send a message to her, but she wouldn't be able to get here much before twelve o'clock. Perhaps you'd better call to-morrow. Afternoons she's free, you understand.'

"But of course what I was thinking about at that particular moment was the problem of the Sarafovs themselves. It was simple enough. They had emigrated to New York some years before, Sarafov taking his wife and two young children to make his fortune in the Golden Country beyond the sea. Not much, according to our standards, no doubt, but a comfortable competence in Turkey where living was so cheap. So they had come back and settled in their native town, in the Frank Quarter, while Sarafov *père* continued for a year or so longer his accumulation of dollars. 'Yes,' said Mrs. Sarafov. 'We liked America all right, after we got used to their ways, but this country's pretty good, too.

Digitized by Google

And it's freer here,' she added, reflectively. This was so astonishing that I felt bound to demand some explanation. It was the first time I had heard of any one fleeing from America to seek liberty in the Sultan's dominions. 'Why,' said Mrs. Sarafov, 'you can't do a thing in America without you get soaked for it, some way. And the prices! A dollar don't go any distance at all. My husband, he says, "Yes, but you are handling the money, though." That's like a man!'

"They were astonishing. They sat there, those three extremely handsome females, easy and uncorseted, their white teeth gleaming, their perfect complexions glowing, their dark eyes and hair shining in the lamplight, and contradicted all the conventional notions I had ever held about American emigrants. They had no animus against America, you must remember, but they possessed something for which even the western republic cannot supply a substitute—a traditional love of the land of their ancestors. They had a perfectly steady and unsentimental grip upon realities. Liberty for them was not a frothy gabble of insincere verbiage, but a clear and concrete condition of body and soul. I suppose the perfectly healthy have no dreams. Their vitality, like the vitality of so many of the people in these regions, was extraordinary. It was like a radiance

Digitized by Google

around them. They seemed independent of everything peculiar to our boasted western civilization. Neither patent medicines nor cosmetics nor municipal enterprise came into their lives at all. There were no books in the house. They produced figs in syrup, and sherbet and cognac, and a smooth red wine that was a most generous cordial. They gave me bread and raisins. They had all the things we read of, and strive to imitate, and which we imagine we buy in cans. They had no manners, for they ate with their fingers and licked them vigorously afterward; yet they conveyed the impression that their civilization was older than the ruined turrets above the city. They sat and moved with the poised rhythm and dignity of the larger carnivora. The girls reclined with an easy and assured relaxing of the limbs upon a settee of violet plush, and their grouping made me think instantly of ancient sculptural forms. They were without that *nuance* and stealthy deception which gives us such a feeling of manly superiority over our own women, and without which masculine humour would die out. Perhaps it was because, not only did they dispense with what are called breakfast foods, but with breakfast itself, that they could sit there in the merciless glare of an unshaded kerosene lamp and defy one with their flawless and amiable personalities. And while I

Digitized by Google

sat there and talked to them and ate their bizarre and appetizing provender, I became aware of something even more astonishing than their failure to use the immeasurable advantages of existence in a Brooklyn apartment, where the breath of life, warmed beyond endurance, came up out of mysterious grids in the walls and dried all the vitality out of them. It wasn't only that, it transpired. These women, with their quality of hard, practical devotion to a concrete bodily well-being, conveyed something beyond all that. For when I suggested that Artemisia's way of life must place her beyond their sympathies, they registered emphatic dissent. For why? They were unable to understand. They looked at each other.

"'That's American,' said Mrs. Sarafov, distinctly.

"'Not entirely,' I protested. 'It has a certain vogue in England also, I assure you. And personally,' I added, 'I am bound to say it makes a difference. I regret it.'

"'But,' said Mrs. Sarafov, and she turned her eyes upon her younger daughter, who was going out with some dishes, 'But she must have a man to look after her.' She regarded me attentively. 'I suppose you know that she is very fond of you. She is always talking about how kind you were to her on the ship. And in London. She says you liked her at first.

Digitized by Google

And I can't see,' she went on, 'why, if you regret it, as you say, you didn't look after her yourself. She would have gone.'

"'And you think that would have made any difference?' I demanded. I was very much disturbed at this sudden turn of things. I seemed to be getting away from my cherished position as a super in the play. And it was the emotion educed from this conversation that revealed to me how these women had abandoned their life in America without regret. I had a vision of it suddenly as I looked at the other daughter's face. She was regarding me with a sort of raptness. The exquisite features glowed and the bright, bronze-coloured eyes burned above purple shadows like lamps above dark pools. Yes, I had a vision of it suddenly, and it was what we call, lightly, cynically, disapprovingly, Romance. It was simply this—that to them, what we deem a dangerous and useless appendage of our spiritual life is a tremendous and vital need. So tremendous and so vital that the external moral aspect of it was a matter of little importance. To put the case in point, they were interested in me not because I was a moral Englishman but because Artemisia was fond of me. It was for them as simple as breathing to go with the being one loved. And back of that there was another thing, which scared the modern and moral being within

Digitized by Google

me still more. It followed, from their perfectly naïve and innocent faith in Romance, that a woman was not a political equal of man, a strenuous co-educated, enfranchised voter, but a possession. The crown of her achievement was to be possessed by the man she loved. He might kill her or enslave her, but without men she was of no importance whatever. And I suspected that my own attitude which, mind you, is the attitude of most of us, to draw away at the approach of a compromising emotion, was difficult to comprehend. Especially when, in response to the inevitable question, I said I wasn't married or promised. They harped on it, those two, while the younger girl was in the kitchen. It was evident Artemisia had confided a great deal to them and they had talked and talked, turning this peculiar problem over in their minds, the problem of a man who persisted in remaining a super in the play. Barbarous of them? Well, let us say mediæval. They lived in a world of harsh limitations and extraordinary latitudes. They were forbidden divorce and were accustomed to neighbours with a plurality of wives. They seemed to know nothing of the refinements of modern passion. For them it was a question of sex, without any admixture of social or racial distinctions. That Artemisia had had a lover in England was not a matter of amazement to them

Digitized by Google

at all. What they couldn't understand was the reason why everything had to be driven underground. And the extremely *bourgeois* conception of love culminating in a colourless civil contract between a good provider and a capable housekeeper, which was all they could see in American institutions—a civil contract which could apparently be shot to pieces upon any frivolous pretext, struck their mediæval minds as profoundly irreligious and unpleasant.

"And then," said Mr. Spenlove, suddenly turning and savagely addressing the silent and recumbent forms in the darkness of the awning, "I made another astonishing discovery. They respected Captain Macedoine. A nice old gentleman! They thought he was fine! I give you my word, when they told me that, and proposed that we go right in and see him, I obtained a glimmer of what Nietzsche must have meant when he spoke of the transvaluation of all values. I was startled by the sudden realization of how tenaciously I had been holding to my belief in that man's essential unworthiness. You regard a man for years as despicable and rotten, judging him as though you were God, and then you meet a woman who worships the very ground he treads on, or a child to whom he is a fanatically fond parent. Of course, the enthusiasm of Monsieur Nikitos for his patron was discounted for by my

Digitized by Google

low estimate of Nikitos himself. Possibly, I mused in a startled way, as we entered the dark ante-room of Captain Macedoine's abode, M. Nikitos was regarded by a septuagenarian mother as an angel of light. The possibility remains in suspense, for of that gentleman's antecedents I don't recall any particulars. I saw him again, as you shall hear, but he failed to prepossess me in his favour. He departed from my view, a perplexing and polysyllabic problem, claiming for himself a useless and preposterous purity. But perhaps it was not so useless from his point of view. Perhaps he owed his brief political omnipotence, when the whole country flamed into battle, murder, and sudden death, to his peculiar mania for a spectacular chastity. They say men fear such freaks, and deem them endowed with sinister supernatural powers. Possibly. There are strange things embedded in that fierce lava-flow of the Balkan volcanoes, congealed agonies and solidified monstrosities of soul.

"At first I could see nothing save that the chamber was large and lofty. Even at the moment it struck me—a sort of last attempt at superiority, you know—that it would be just like Captain Macedoine to live in a large and lofty chamber without much light. And then, as I saw him, propped up among cushions on an immense bed, with a table close at hand on

Digitized by Google

which reposed writing materials, books, a photograph, and a small shaded lamp, I wondered why the characteristics which in him had created such animosity should take the form of an alluring hypnotism in his daughter. Such thoughts make one uneasy and anxious for one's position as a super in the play. For that was the upshot of it, that I was shakily anxious to see her again, to see Captain Macedoine because he was her father, to drift, I knew not where. I was a pretty spectacle to myself, I can assure you!

"His illness had emaciated him, and the crimson bedspread, together with the long, drooping folds of the looped-up mosquito-bar, like the curtains of a catafalque, and a round cap he wore to cover his bald spot, gave him the air of some old pope holding an audience. He raised his eyes without lifting his head, and smiled as Madame Sarafov and her daughter, with measured strides that reminded one again of the larger carnivora, moved forward to the bedside. And he lifted his hand in a decidedly pontifical fashion, as though to bless them. I remained for a moment in the shadow before they turned and explained who I was; and the pale blue eyes, without any recognition, beamed upon me as upon a new and promising adherent to the faith. He was immensely improved, though very much nearer the grave than when I had seen him for that

Digitized by Google

dubious moment through the window of his house in Ipsilon. The harsh ravages of a life of distorted ideals had been softened by illness to an ascetic benignity. And he talked. I was obliged to admit to myself that so far I had never seen him in private life. He talked and he was full of reminiscence. He had a musical tenor voice, and he spoke rapidly and with an unconcerned change from subject to subject which might be set down to garrulity. He gazed into the shadows as he talked and I listened, very much astonished. For it was not the talk of a wicked man or an unhappy man or even an unsuccessful man. It was rather the talk of an intelligent humbug, such as one might expect from the superannuated and senile secretary of some rich and fantastic scientific society. He gave one that impression, that his whole life had been one of gentle dilletantism under the protecting shadow of giant vested interests. It was an astonishingly picturesque scene, the sort of *genre* picture the Victorians did so well and for which we moderns have so profound a contempt. It might have been called 'The Old Professor Tells His Story.' It flowed from him. He had a fund of phrases, quite common no doubt, but which he used as though he had invented them himself. His long, rose-tinted, transparent nostrils moved at times. His hands lay on the bedspread,

Digitized by Google

singularly small and chunky for so large a being, and he often withdrew his gaze suddenly from the shadows of the past and examined his knuckles with a sharp scrutiny that, I suppose, was merely a habit born of an unconscious reflex action, but gave one a notion that at times he began to doubt his own reality.

"And then," said Mr. Spenlove after a pause, "I discovered that Captain Macedoine belonged to that class of raconteurs who do not believe in reticence on personal matters. I have very little of that sort of squeamishness myself, but he was much more confidential. If confidential is the word. Because there was no atmosphere of confession about his story. He frequently interjected the words, 'you know,' and it really seemed as if he assumed that we did know, and was just amusing himself. Or perhaps he was rehearsing for the day of judgment. No matter. He ran on. And we listened. We were interrupted once, when an elderly person, 'My housekeepah,' as he called her, 'Madame Petronita,' came in with some sustaining liquid in a basin. And if you ask me what he talked about, I should say that he furnished us with a large number of details of his private life which the majority of us never mention even though we may not be ashamed of them. At this distance of time it presents to me the sort of memory which one retains of an interesting

Digitized by Google

book read long ago. I remember him, you see, because of what happened afterward, because he was the father of this girl of whom I am telling you, and I recall the picture of him dispensing those amiable garrulities because it was as we sat there that the notion first came to me that he was really an original artist working upon himself and concealing himself behind the grandiose presentment of an impossibly superior and effulgent human being. All I had known of him or heard of him in the old days corroborated this notion of mine. 'We are a very old family, you know—I was a younger son, you know—I was at Charterhouse School, you know—we were very poor—a scholarship boy, you know.' This was addressed to a certain extent to me, as an Englishman, of course, but the glamour of his rich intonation enveloped those two beautiful women, mother and daughter, sitting there with their perfect parted lips and their extraordinarily seductive Slavonic eyes. It would be interesting, no doubt, to know just what they imagined lay in the portentous statement that Captain Macedoine had been sent as a poor boy —a day boy, he informed us meticulously—to that ancient foundation known as the Charterhouse—they with their oriental antecedents, their untrammelled comprehension of the romantic value of life, and their initiation into western ways in a Brooklyn

Digitized by Google

apartment. Yet I'm not sure that deep did not call into deep, that they did not succeed in getting hold of his real meaning after all. As Mrs. Sarafov said to me afterward in the intense darkness of the street, 'Captain Macedoine, he goes 'way back, I guess'; and there was a peculiar inflection in her tone which brought to mind echoing corridors in the house of life.

"Yes, he was a younger son and he went out into an unsympathetic world as a 'secretary'. Became a land-steward on great estates, secretary to a London club, which fell on evil days, and was—in short—shut up. Travelled for a while. I like that. It gave the obliging human imagination such scope in which to devise a romantic and Byronic pilgrimage for him. Accepted a post as purser on a grand duke's yacht. He began to move in exalted circles. Grand duchesses, princesses of principalities, eccentric millionaires, oriental potentates, and English nobles with Mediterranean villas came upon the stage and performed various evolutions which brought them into touch with the Grand Duke's purser. He was thanked for his services on one occasion by a fat, pop-eyed voluptuary who has become famous in history for scientific and cold-blooded political murders. Was offered a cigarette from the Imperial case which he accepted of course, but

Digitized by Google

did not venture to smoke. Indeed, murmured Captain Macedoine with a faint smile, he had it still. 'My dear,' he addressed the girl Pollyni, 'if you will bring me the bag in the top drawer over there. . . .' She came back into the circle of light bearing a small black bag of formidably heavy leather, the handle-straps sewn right round the body of it and the bronze hasp fitted with a massive brass padlock. It was a bag to inspire awe; and yet it made me smile. On one side the thick leather had been carefully pared away in three places. You see, I recognized that bag at once as one of the specie carriers of the Maracaibo Steamship Company, whose initials M. S. C. had been removed. It reminded me that after all I had known this personality, in the making, when he had not yet realized all his magnificent possibilities. In those days the furtive theft of a leather bag was all in the day's work. But when I looked at him again I was almost afraid to believe my own memories and conclusions. He held the bag before him, his small chunky hands gathered together on the handles, and gazed into the shadows with an expression of gentle and refined melancholy upon his face, as though he knew there might be nothing in the bag after all.

"But there was. There were things in that bag I couldn't have believed existed out of a museum

Digitized by Google

or a grand-opera property-room. There were his epaulettes and other insignia as a grand duke's purser, thick slices of gold and silver lace, buttons as large as medallions, and a badge like some ancient coat of arms done in glittering enamel. There were russia-leather boxes whose frayed edges still bore traces of exquisite gold-tooling and which, on being opened, bore within, delicately printed on their satin lining, the strange names of oriental and Levantine jewellers. And in one of these boxes, an oblong affair like the case of a cigar-holder, we were permitted to behold the cigarette which the great potentate had deigned to offer the Grand Duke's purser. A fat oval thing bearing an imperial monogram in gold. Captain Macedoine regarded it reverently as it lay on his palm. From His Majesty's own case, he observed in a deep abstraction. Part of the Old Order. Soon to go. . . . He spread out his bizarre possessions on the coverlet and showed us each in turn. There was a slip-ring for a cravat, of gold so heavy it could never be used, and with an incongruous emerald like a lump of bottle glass clamped to the centre of it. There was a stick-pin with a perfect knob of silly-looking rubies. There were cuff-buttons like Brazil nuts and about as beautiful, with diamonds in an eruption around the edges. There was a gold stop watch in a hunter case, with a

Digitized by Google

chime and a coat-of-arms. And there was a gold cigarette case like a polished slab, almost insolent in its sheer, naked pricelessness. These, it appeared, were tokens of recognition from various wealthy personages who had been guests on the Grand Duke's yacht. It was customary, you know. There had been many others, which he did not regard with any particular sentiment, and had sold or exchanged for feminine trinkets for his dear Euphrosyne. There was a movement on the part of the two women as he pronounced this name and I looked at the girl. She met my gaze with a radiant smile and a little nod that seemed to mean 'Now we are coming to it.' As we were. For Captain Macedoine went on to inform us that one of the penalties of his wanderings among princes and plutocrats was an almost monastic habit of life. It would not have done, you know. He was the repository of discreet confidences, the inarticulate witness of august privacies. He occupied a position, so he seemed to imply, similar to that of the eunuchs of oriental empires, in so far as he was supposed to have no ascertainable human attributes beyond cupidity and intelligence. A seneschal! So it fell out that the Grand Duke, whose photograph showed a much be-whiskered person with very long thin legs and a huge nose, found himself without a purser one day. Captain Macedoine

Digitized by Google

resigned. Under ordinary circumstances he would have returned to England and settled on a small estate in the country. But the circumstances were not ordinary. He had become the last of his line. The Macedoines had been dwindling for centuries. Did I believe in hereditary destinies? Families do die out, you know. So instead of taking the P. L. M. express from Cannes to Paris and so on to London, he took a passage to New York. First class, you know. As we reached this particular stage in Captain Macedoine's reminiscences, a brief and extraordinarily concentrated expression came into the pale blue eyes fixed on the shadows beyond the bed, his hands and nostrils remained momentarily rigid, as though a sharp memory had gone right through him and bereft him of all volition. And his eyes, closing, seemed to take his life with them and he became a corpse enjoying, let us say, a siesta. And this paroxysm, which gave me an uncomfortable feeling that Captain Macedoine was omitting the really interesting details of his departure from the Grand Duke's yacht, was construed by the Sarafov women as a symptom of mental anguish; and the girl, with a gesture almost divine in its exquisite and restrained impulsiveness, touched his arm. A smile suffused the man's features before he opened his eyes and turned them upon her with sacerdotal

Digitized by Google

graciousness. The thing was so unreal that I was lost in a turmoil of effort to retain my hold upon actuality. The histrionic instinct gives one strange jolts when viewed close up. And through that turmoil I heard him telling them, as he had done before often enough no doubt, the story of how he met his dear Euphrosyne in the old French Quarter. And as he often said, you know, his dear Artemisia was the living image, you know, of her dear mother. His hand moved absently and the girl, anticipating his desire as though they had rehearsed the performance many times, leaned forward, took a photograph from the table, and handed it to me. His dear Euphrosyne!

"Well, it wasn't so very like his daughter after all, not really so like her as Pollyni was like Mrs. Sarafov. The woman in the photo was undeniably beautiful, but it was the beauty of the octaroon. The large eyes and the full, sensuous lips expressed with sombre emphasis the great enigma of race. In her daughter this enigma had been transmuted into an intensely personal thing, a seductive mystery that made men love her at the same time that it overshadowed love and filled them with anxiety for their spiritual safety. There was none of her radiant, aggressive insouciance in the photograph. It was the portrait of a clinging and rapacious female. A soft and delicious parasite,

Digitized by Google

the victim of an immense and tragic error. I heard Captain Macedoine, while I sat with the photograph in my hand, telling of the almost incredible happiness of his home life in the little wooden cottage amid the tall grasses out on Tchoupitoulas Street. It all came back to me as I listened. The clangour of the box-cars being switched where the trolley bumped along the docks; the dry and dismal stretch of Poydras Street in the evening, the stark warehouses of Calliope, and then mile on mile of verandahed shabbiness, getting more and more open, with fields and cross-roads running down into mere vague vacancies, or perhaps a shy, solitary cottage. And the extraordinary sunsets over the lake—sunsets like vast flat washes of crimson and gamboge and violet, which were wiped out as by a hasty hand and left the wide-spaced *faubourgs* a prey to the murmurous onslaught of insects and the hollow boom of enormous frogs. And the two women sat in rapt silence, absorbing the romantic story with its romantic setting. An artificial story, if you like, as everything about Captain Macedoine was artificial. It was almost as if he had achieved his destiny by coming at last to that extraordinary concoction of artificialities which we call New Orleans, where dead civilizations lie superimposed one upon the other like leaves in a rotten old book, where you can cut down through them, from the mail-steamer

Digitized by Google

and the trolley-car and the fake religion, right down to the poisonous swamp and the Voodoo frenzy. It was a place whose very silences were eloquent of sadness and frustrated achievement, and he chose it as the scene of incredible happiness! For he conceived an affection for the city which led him to say in so many words that it was the only possible place to live, in the United States. His patrician upbringing and cosmopolitan career, it seems, had brought him to the same view of our western civilization as Mrs. Sarafov. It was this peculiar notion once more obtruded upon me that stung me into speech with him.

"'You really think that?' 'You prefer this sort of place, for instance, to New England?'

"'Oh there's no comparison,' he returned. 'Here you have absolute freedom. There you are strapped down in a groove and remain there, unless you fancy going to prison.' And he laughed contemptuously, as at some reminiscence.

"'What do you understand by freedom?' I demanded and he bent his gaze moodily upon the shadows as though seeking to elucidate some depressing problem.

"'There are a good many answers to that question,' he said at length, 'but I should say, in my case, that it means deliverance from the Anglo-Saxon's infernal

Digitized by Google

ideas of morality.' The last words came out with what was almost a snarl. He put the things he had been showing us back in the bag and locked it. 'Will you put it back, my dear?' he murmured with a smile. 'We must pick out something for you when . . . eh?' The girl gave him an affectionate glance and carried the bag away into the dusk.

"'Then I take it, Captain, you are doing well here?' I observed. He shrugged his shoulders.

"'So-so,' he answered. 'So-so. Political troubles have interfered so far, but it is upon them really that we build, you know. Our losses will be more than made good shortly.'

"'But I was given to understand that the Minister of the Interior declined to authorize the concessions.'

"Captain Macedoine became extremely human. He grinned behind his chunky hand.

"'Pardon me for laughing,' he returned. 'The Minister of the Interior has gone on a long tour in Anatolia, for his health. It is quite possible he will remain down there. It would certainly be a sensible thing to do.'

"'Why, what do you mean?" I asked.

"'Is it possible you do not know?' he said in a pitying tone. 'The English newspapers print a great deal of football news and racing, but a matter like this is passed over in silence. Eh? What? These

Digitized by Google

ladies know. I know. But you don't know. Your captain does not know either, I dare say. Nor your owners. I was prepared for this three months back, I may say. My affiliations with various syndicates enabled me to draw the necessary deductions. I chartered three ships, borrowing the money at very high interest. Those ships are loading stores and ammunition in Glasgow. They will arrive in about three weeks.'

"'Ammunition?' I repeated, rather suspecting his sanity. This was in 1912, remember.

"'Dear me, yes,' he answered with another pitying smile. 'Didn't you know really? There will be war you know. Next week possibly. Perhaps to-morrow. Why,' he added with considerable animation, 'it might start to-night!'"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII

MR. SPENLOVE, seated on the extreme edge of his little deck-stool, his knees out, his hands lightly inserted in his trouser pockets, paused again in his narrative and looked over his shoulder as the quartermaster at the gangway rang four bells. The moon was gone behind the vast mass of rock which had been used by him as a material background to the fantastic tale he was telling in his own introspective and irritating manner. Out beyond the sharp black silhouette of the headland the open water was a dazzling glitter that contrasted oddly with the profound obscurity of the tiny haven. From time to time a silent form had risen from the chairs beneath the awning and gone forward to the navigating bridge, returning in the same unobtrusive fashion. And as Mr. Spenlove paused, and the clear-toned bronze bell rang four strokes that echoed musically from the cliff, another form, moving with care, emerged from the ward-room scuttle and set down a tray on a small table. There was a movement among the deck

Digitized by Google

chairs as feet came down softly and felt for discarded shoes, and the surgeon, clearing his throat noisily, stood up and yawned. One by one the officers who had thus elected to pass a night in conversation took from the tray a cup of the British Navy's celebrated cocoa and returned to their chairs. Mr. Spenlove, still sitting upright and looking round as though he expected someone to contradict him, put out his hand, and the night-steward placed in it the remaining cup before moving off and vanishing into the shadows, shot by gleams of brass handrails and polished oak, of the companion. Mr. Spenlove, his head cocked slightly on one side, his dark elvish eyebrows raised satirically, and his sharp, short beard moving slightly, stirred his cocoa. He betrayed no concern as to the state of mind of his audience. He was well aware that the perfect listener does not exist. The novelist is more fortunate. For every hundred persons who deign to take up his book and trifle with it for an hour, putting it down upon the slightest pretext and perhaps forgetting to finish it, there will be one enthusiast who savors every word, notes the turn of a phrase, and enjoys the peculiar idiosyncrasies of the style. One must not expect this when telling a tale, except perhaps when one is a boy, and the dormitory is hushed to listen, and one goes on and on until honest snores register

Digitized by Google

satiety. Mr. Spenlove, stirring and sipping his cocoa, stared straight across at Grünbaum's house, which the current had now brought before him, and composed his thoughts before going on to the final conclusion of his story. He was moved somewhat himself because the mere act of narration had evoked memories whose strength he had perhaps underestimated since they had remained dormant so long, and the immediate stress of the great conflict, in which they were all leisurely participating, had led him to imagine that the world before the war was dead and gone. Which it wasn't, he reflected, setting down his cup and beginning to roll a cigarette . . . not by a long shot; and remained silent yet a little longer, marvelling at the extraordinary triviality of such things as war, against the sombre verities of Race and Love and Despair.

And then he suddenly became aware that the shoes had been again softly discarded, and he heard the creak of the trestles as the navigating officer stretched himself on his camp-bed alongside the hand-steering gear. Rolling a cigarette Mr. Spenlove began again.

"I doubt if you can conceive now," he remarked, "how that bland announcement of a possible war before morning startled and shocked me. I doubt if anybody realizes how such things tore our hearts before those autumn days in nineteen fourteen. Some

Digitized by Google

of you may remember when war was declared between England and the Boer Republics. Quite a little thrill in London; a romantic feeling that the die was cast, and all that sort of thing. But that was far away across the sea, a diminutive business which it pleased us to consider one of our punitive expeditions. War, the collision of European hosts, was a subject for literature and art. It wouldn't ever happen again. The Turks and Italians had been at war and it had been a decorous affair involving some nebulous actions in Cyrenaica—a locality we had never heard of before—and a few amusing incidents at sea. I remember we were pursued all one morning by an indignant Italian scout-ship during that war, who wanted to know why we hadn't stopped at her signal. I believe, as a matter of fact, the mate on the bridge had been making himself a hammock and hadn't seen anything. And when they did catch us up our skipper simply broke out the Red Ensign, showed his codeflags, and went ahead. War? We hadn't any conception of what the word meant. Our troops were always walloping some tribe or other in India and so forth, and we lived in a peaceful, orderly world.

"But Captain Macedoine's remark that war might break out at any time had something, intangible if you like, to corroborate it. It was in the air. It

Digitized by Google

was very evident in that crowded café when the robust gentleman in the frock coat and fez and wearing a silver star was working his hearers up to a hoarse, guttural frenzy about something—probably our old friend Liberty. There was a destroyer in the harbour near us—a dingy-looking and obsolete craft with low, sullen funnels and a disagreeable array of torpedo-tubes with the fat snouts of torpedoes lurking under the hoods. In those days a war-ship of any sort made one think all sorts of chaotic thoughts. And now he had mentioned it to me, a good many other things came to mind which pointed toward some readjustment of power. Our sudden charter for Saloniki, for example, breaking in on our pleasant, regular jog-trot trip to keep the great mills of northern Italy going. Yes, I believed him in spite of my prejudice, and I showed it by taking my leave with a certain degree of haste and starting for the ship. We always do that. It is our idea of safety—to get back to the ship. Habit and duty constrain us. But I had to be shown the way. It was a dark, moonless night and I had very little notion how to proceed. We bade Captain Macedoine good-night and he immediately assumed the manner of an aged ecclesiastic. He became much older. I don't know whether you will get just what I mean, but the mere fact that he was holding the centre of the stage, that

Digitized by Google

we were all looking at him and listening to him and thinking about him, had seemed to inform him with an actual access of vitality. But when I started from my motionless pose in the background and scraped my chair and muttered something about having to get back to the ship, he seemed to fade. He looked at me for an instant in an attentive and perplexed fashion, as though he could hardly account for my presence.

"'I never cared for the sea,' he murmured. 'A preposterous life. All the disadvantages of being in jail with—what was it? Something or other . . . I forget . . . well, you must come again. Always pleased, you know. . . .'

"And then, outside, Mrs. Sarafov insisted that I I would lose my way. Pollyni must go with me and show me a short route to a landing-stage where I could get a boat. We stood in the clear darkness of the high, narrow sidewalk, and I could feel the girl move closer to me as she lifted her chin and smiled into my eyes. What? Lyrical? Well, I can tell you that you would have been lyrical, too, doctor. I was thirty-five, you know, and I had never been in close contact with beautiful women before. Just as Artemisia had her own secret lure, a lure founded on her exquisite, derisive humour and her sombre heritage, so this extraordinarily seductive and friendly

Digitized by Google

young person, an entrancing character composed of Eastern mystery and Western frankness, appealed irresistibly to the connoisseur in a man. She was sex, and nothing but sex, yet she maintained without effort the rôle of being merely a dear friend of Captain Macedoine's daughter.

"'You must come again,' said Mrs. Sarafov, drawing her shawl round her fine shoulders. 'We don't often see people from the other side. In the afternoon, eh? And Miss Macedoine, she'll come over.'

"'Then you don't think there will be any trouble?' I asked. 'Any fighting, I mean.'

"'We never interfere in politics,' she answered, drily. 'So long as you mind your own business and let them fight it out among 'emselves, you're safe enough here, I should say.'

"'What is it all about?' I demanded.

"'That's more than I can tell you,' she answered with disarming candour. 'Taxes mostly, I guess. But you have to pay 'em to somebody.' And then she added cryptically: 'I don't know as we'll be any better off if they was to win.'

"Well, we talked a little longer and then the girl, who had run into the house for a shawl, stepped along beside me with her long, sure-footed stride and we started up the dark street. There were very few

Digitized by Google

lights about now and from time to time she put her hand on my arm as we came to a gap in the sidewalk.

"'And so,' I said in a low tone, 'you are a great friend of Miss Macedoine, I understand.'

"'Oh, yes,' she said. 'I like her very much. She tells me everything.'

"'Everything?' She nodded, leaning forward and looking up at me in a certain demure, elvish fashion.

"'Yes!' she replied, dwelling on the word with tremendous emphasis. 'Everything. About you, when you come to see her in London, you know. Oh, she like you. She like you very much. When she know you have come, she'll be crazy.'

"'But you know,' I protested, 'you know I'm only a sort of friend.'

"'Oh, yes!' again with the dwelling accent. 'Of course, a friend. And she talk and talk and tell me all about you and say to me: "No, he'll never come. I'll never see him again. Forget it," and then she sits and looks at the sea for an hour. And when I say to her: "Why don't you write?" she say, "I have," and is all sad and miserable.'

"'But she didn't tell *me* this when she wrote.'

"'No?' said the girl with a faintly sarcastic inflection. 'Well, she wouldn't . . . I suppose.'

"'Besides which,' I went on, 'she gave me to

Digitized by Google

understand she was living with this Monsieur Kinaitsky, so. . . .'

"'He supports her,' she said, 'she's very lucky.'

"'How?' I asked, astonished at this peculiar sentiment.

"'Because he never goes near her for, oh, since this three months. He's married, you know. You'll pass his house in the boat, only there's a fog on the Gulf to-night. And he supports four others. Very rich. And so long as she stays round she can do what she likes.'

"'Would you mind telling me, my dear,' I said, 'why this gentleman supports all these . . . er . . . strangers?' She shrugged her shoulders and took my arm daintily.

"'Because he's rich, I suppose,' she remarked. 'They all do it here. In England—no?' she added in inquiry.

"'Well, not on such a lavish scale,' I admitted. 'Then there would be no harm in my going to see her where she lives?'

"'Oh, sure! She wants you to. I'll go to-morrow, eh? And tell her you will come? What time?'

"'What about the afternoon?'

"'Yes. And now I'll tell you how to get there.'

"'You'd better write it down,' I said, 'when we come to a light.'

Digitized by Google

"As we approached the road running parallel to the curve of the Gulf the air became heavy and moist. It was October, with a chill in the midnight air. And for another thing, it was as quiet as any country road of an autumn night at home. Our feet padded softly on the matted leaves lying wet on the path when we turned into the main road, and through the gardens of the villas came a faint breath of air laden with salt and the dead odours of the river delta. We seemed to be alone in the world, we two, as we hurried along in the darkness, and the girl pressed more closely to me as though for protection against unseen dangers. And yet, so crystal clear was her soul, that there lay on my mind a delicious fancy that she was deliberately impersonating the woman who had talked to her of me, that she was offering herself as a chaste and temporary substitute for the being whom, so she assumed, we both loved.

"And I," said Mr. Spenlove, after some business with a reluctant match, "was not prepared, just then, to deny it. It would be absurd and misleading to speak of a community of interest as love, yet we are driven to discover some reason for what we call love apart from the appeal of sex. Otherwise a pretty promiscuous kettle of fish! Where does it begin and out of what does it grow? I'm not asking because I imagine I shall get any answer. I'm inclined to

Digitized by Google

believe the origin of love is as obscure as that of life itself. I put the thought into words, because at that moment, with that girl beside me, with the whole mundane contraption of existence obliterated by a damp, foggy darkness, with the moisture dripping hurriedly from invisible trees, and the immediate future rendered ominous by Captain Macedoine's remarks, I felt a conviction that I was closer to the solution of the problem than I had ever been before. Or since, for that matter. Closer, I say. I was aware of it without being actually able to take hold of it. Nor did I try to take hold of it. I was still in that condition of mucilaginous uncertainty toward my emotions in which most of us English seem to pass our days. Foreigners are led to imagine we really take no interest in the subject of love, for example, we are so scared of any approach to the flames of desire. We compromise by floating down some economic current into the broad river of matrimony. We have a genius for emotional relinquishment. We—you—are born compromisers. We are so sure that we shall never know the supreme raptures of passion that most of us never do know them. And in any case we are so rattled by the mere proximity of love that we never seem to get any coherent conception of its nature. And I was not much of an exception. I have no supreme secret

Digitized by Google

to impart to you. As I have said, I am *par excellence* a super in the play. For a few memorable moments I was entrusted with the part of a principal. It was not my fault, after all, that nothing came of it. I sometimes wonder what *would* have come of it, had not her sinister destiny intervened. . . .

"And then suddenly our feet struck timber that rang hollow and I made out a slender jetty running into the fog. The girl moved ahead, drawing me after her as she scanned the water with her other hand shading her eyes. For a moment she stood listening and then she uttered a melodious contralto shout for someone named '*Makri!*' I can recall, as I repeat the word, the name of that obscure and unknown boatman, the very timbre of her voice, the poise of her form, and the firm flexure of her fingers on mine. And for that moment, as we stood waiting and the boat came slowly and silently toward us with the standing figure of the oarsman lost in the higher fog, I had an extraordinary impression, clear and diminutive as a vignette, that I loved her and that she, in some mysterious fashion, could love me without jeopardizing her own destiny. A folly, of course; but I insist it gave me an inkling, that brief illumination, of the actual nature of love."

At this momentous declaration Mr. Spenlove suddenly relapsed into a pause that became a

Digitized by Google

silence, as though he were still under the influence of that illumination of which he spoke, and were pondering it to the extent of forgetting his audience altogether. And it was a suspicion of this amiable idiosyncrasy which caused the surgeon to make a remark. Mr. Spenlove gave a grunt of assent.

"Yes," he said. "You are right. But this is not a supreme secret. I can only offer you the suggestion that what you call a love affair is really only a sequence of innumerable small passions. Yes, for a moment, you know, I saw them plainly enough—a procession of tiny, perfect things, moments, gestures, glances, and silences each complete and utterly beautiful in itself, preoccupied with its own perfection. Scientific? Not at all. Intuition and nothing else. One did not indulge in science with that magical girl holding one's hand. Science is only a sort of decorous guesswork at the best, guesswork corroborated by facts. In the presence of a woman like that, you know! At this distance of time, my friends, I can tell you that this girl, the chance acquaintance of a chance evening, imposed her personality upon me as the very genius of the tender passion. Yet I had but that one rhythmical moment by which to judge—and the boat, a long and elegantly carved affair of cedar wood decorated with brass bulbs, slid softly alongside, a tiny lantern

Digitized by Google

glowing between the thwarts; like some perilous bark of destiny, and she a charming, enigmatic spirit watching with gracious care my departure for an alluring yet unknown shore.

"For that is what it was. I stepped into that long, narrow affair, with its tall, gondola-like prow and absurd brass balls, and I left my youth behind on the hollow-sounding boards of that jetty. No, there is nothing to laugh at in a man of thirty-five leaving his youth behind. There are men who have seen their own daughters married, and retain for themselves the hearts of adventurous boys. From the formidable ramparts of half a century they can leap down and frolic with the young fellows who for the first time are in love, or seeing the world, or holding down a job, or reading Balzac. I cannot compete with such men. Youth fills me with awe. It is something I believe I had once, but I am not sure. I watch them nowadays, with their unerring cruelty of instinct, their clear egotism, their uncanny intuition and sophistication, and I wonder if I were ever like that, a sort of callow and clever young god! I wonder, too, whether a good deal of the modern misery and unhappiness isn't simply due to women being at a loss, as it were, to know just what the new and improved breed of young men want. All this talk of women themselves becoming modern is so much flub-dub.

Digitized by Google

Look at Mrs. Evans. She was, and is, coeval with the Jurassic Period. And women are continually trying to get back there. You may ask me how I know this, and I can only tell you that I have an emotional conviction—the strongest conviction in the world, born of the tremendous experience which was coming upon me.

"And the first thing which, you might say, certified my new status as a grown-up human being, was my promise to go and see Captain Macedoine's daughter. I mean I made that promise without a shadow of reservation. In youth we hedge, we balk, we bilk, over and over again. Fidelity is unattractive to us. We cannot see that to keep a promise made to a woman is a species of spiritual strength. It may be a foolish promise made to a worthless woman, but that is of no importance. In youth we go on breaking away, breaking away, for one reason or another, until we have not even faith in ourselves, until we lose sight of the essential nature of true fidelity, which is a blind disregard of our own immediate well being. And I was astonished, as I sat in that boat and floated away into the gray void of the fog, with the girl, the shore, the sky, all gone, that she had infected me with her romantic view of life. I had always preserved a sort of semi-religious notion that love, for me personally you know, was bound to be an affair of

Digitized by Google

highly respectable and virtuous character. I don't know why, I'm sure, but I had that illusion. But I discovered in that fog-bound boat that I knew very little about myself after all, that the future was absolutely unknown to me beyond the grand fact that I was going to the address which the girl had repeated twice in her musical contralto, and that I was mysteriously exalted about it.

"I was steering, you know, and had let things go a bit, I suppose, under the stress of my thoughts, when I realized the boatman was calling to me and waving an arm. I collected my wits and looked round. There was a methodical sound of oars and in a moment a large boat loomed close to us and I saw the ghostly figures of the four rowers, their bodies rising to full height as they plunged their oars in deep and then fell slowly backward to the thwarts. And as the boat moved forward again in one of its long, rhythmical surges and the stern of her came into the faint radiance of our small lantern I saw a bent figure with a fez lean suddenly forward, grasping the gunwale with one hand and his coat collar with the other and stare at us with a fixed, crouching intensity that was familiar. I was perfectly certain it was M. Nikitos, and in the mental excitement of wondering what he might be doing at that hour in a four-oared boat, I was turning my own craft round in a half

Digitized by Google

circle. I heard voices in the fog, the voice of M Nikitos giving strident orders and hoarse growls of assent from the toiling boatman. The sounds died away and I became aware of other sounds close by, the long hiss and slap of the sea against masonry, and voices. Voices clamouring and protesting and calling aimlessly and interjecting unheeded remarks into other voices engaged in torrential vituperation. And then my boatman stood up suddenly, his tall form rising and falling into the fog like some comic contrivance as the swell tossed the boat perilously near the sea-wall, and uttered a sharp, monosyllabic comment. The voices ceased as though by magic, and a grave question came out of the invisible air, which my boatman, leaning out and laying hold of the stones, answered in a quiet and competent fashion. You must understand that I had not seen this man, yet he had already made that impression upon me. The whole business to me, a strange and somewhat exalted Englishman sitting in a reeling row-boat and wondering whether he was about to be dashed to pieces against the stones, savoured of a carefully rehearsed performance. And when a flight of balustraded marble steps came into dim view and a tall figure in silk pajamas, a fur overcoat, and a fez came slowly down into the light of our lantern I gave up and just waited for things to happen. Up

Digitized by Google

above I could now descry the chorus which had been creating such an uproar, a motley collection of male and female retainers in various stages of undress, and holding a number of alarming looking weapons, standing in a row looking down at us in astonishment. And I was just feeling exasperated at being so completely in the dark because I could not understand a word these people were saying, when the tall bizarre person in the fur coat and pajamas leaned over and said:

"'I understand you are an Englishman from one of the ships?'

"'Yes,' I said. 'That is so. What is the matter, may I ask?'

"'An attempt,' said he, 'at robbery and perhaps upon my life. You saw a boat?'

"'Yes,' I said, 'we saw a boat. Was that the man who has been attempting robbery?'

"'The leader,' said he; 'we have the others,' he looked at his retainers, who looked down at us in a most theatrical way.

"'Do you know who he was—the leader?' I asked. All this time I was sitting in the dancing boat while the boatman fended her off with his long arms.

"'No, I regret not.'

"'I can tell you, if you want to know,' I said. He leaned down to get a good look at me, looked

Digitized by Google

back over his shoulder, and called in a reproving voice, upon which one of his minions flew down with a lantern, and we viewed each other in the glare.

"'I think it will be better if you accept my hospitality,' he said, studying me thoughtfully. 'My carriage will take you back to your ship.' He spoke again to my man who replied with grave decorum. I saw him now, a tall, sunburned fellow with an immense black moustache, a round flat cap on his black head, and an embroidered coat with innumerable small buttons and frogs. He held the boat a little nearer in shore and I stepped on to the sea-worn marble stairway. And without a word, in accordance with the magical nature of the affair, my romantic boatman, who had borne me away from my youth and who had proceeded methodically to bear me onward toward my inevitable destiny, pushed off with an oar into the fog and was lost.

"And I assure you," insisted Mr. Spenlove in an aggrieved tone, "that I have the same memory of the scene which followed as one has of a complicated dream. I am not prepared, at this moment, to go into a court of law and swear to all that passed between myself and that perturbed gentleman in the silk pajamas and the fur overcoat. I was living very intensely at the time, you must remember. The exact incidence of the adventure was not clear to me

Digitized by Google

until I was back on the ship. Even when we sat in an apartment of immense size and sombre magnificence, and he said courteously, 'Have we by any chance met before?' I did not fully wake up. I said:

"'I believe so, but I must admit I have forgotten your name.'

"'That is easy,' he smiled. 'It is Kinaitsky. I am equally guilty—more so, for I am not certain whether I have seen you. . . .' he paused as he passed me some cigarettes.

"'At the ——Hotel in London,' I suggested. He pondered for a moment, observing me intently.

"'It would be as well to give me the details,' he remarked. 'Since you are about to do me a valuable service, I should know to whom I am indebted.'

"I told him. He remained silent for quite a while and I sat enjoying a perfect cigarette and an almost equally perfect glass of wine. At length he said:

"'And I understand that your interest in this lady has led you here?'

"'Oh, no,' I assured him. 'People in my walk of life can't do things like that. It just happens my ship's charter was changed, that is all. You can call it good luck, if you like, or bad.'

"'Pardon,' he said, studying me and feeling in the

Digitized by Google

pocket of his overcoat, 'but I am not clear yet just what your intentions are.'

"'I don't know myself,' I answered, foolishly. 'I must see her first. You understand, she wants to see me, as a friend.' He smiled and became grave again at once.

"'I,' he remarked, stiffly, 'have not seen her since my marriage. I allow her an income, of course. I regard that as a simple duty to those who have been under my protection. I may tell you, Monsieur, that she is quite free to dispose of herself. . . . But things are very unsettled here, as you may know. I have large interests which involve me in political affairs. This present affair is of that nature. And I may observe that you were good enough to say you recognized the man who escaped in that boat. I am at a loss to understand how this can be, but let that pass. Who was he?'

"'I was talking to him only to-day,' I returned. 'He calls himself Stepan Nikitos, and he told me he wrote articles on internationalism in a paper called the *Phos*. He is the sort of man who would write fluently no doubt on internationalism, for he seems to be an Egyptian Greek with a strain of Armenian in him. Personally, I believed him to be simply a runner for a ship-chandler of whom perhaps you have heard—Captain Macedoine.'

Digitized by Google

"M. Kinaitsky sat with one arm on the little table between us and regarded me from under sharp black brows with motionless interest. As I mentioned the name of Captain Macedoine he stroked his moustache, and then drew his other hand from his pocket and placed on the table a heavy American revolver.

"'Pardon,' he said, 'but I am unable to see how you come to know this Nikitos. . . . Oh, he is a ship-chandler, you say. Well, he may be that also. But you are not conversant with affairs here or you would appreciate the danger of being friendly with internationalists. That by the way. Your friend,' he went on with gentle irony, 'came here to-night with three men such as can be hired for a few *drachma* in any of the alleys of the *Cité Saul*, to obtain some important documents from my safe. Unfortunately for them the safe is of the latest London pattern with a time-lock, which I bought when in England last year. They only succeeded in alarming my servants and we secured the three men. The leader, this Nikitos, who is well-known as one of those who sell information to the Hellenic Government, a spy and a harbour pimp, escaped. A most unfortunate accident.'

"'But what harm can such a disreputable being do to a man like you?' I enquired in astonishment.

Digitized by Google

M. Kinaitsky spun the chambers of the revolver with his finger.

"'It is impossible,' he observed, calmly, 'to conceive of a state of things in which a disreputable being can not do harm to one who cherishes his reputation. Consider——' he went on, his finger leaving the weapon and levelled at me. 'He has nothing to lose. He is the dupe of desperate and cunning persons who wish to destroy the government. He is poor, and he probably is driven by some woman to obtain money for her gratification at all costs.'

"'No,' I said. 'You don't know M. Nikitos. He has a very peculiar attitude toward women. You might almost call him vociferously virtuous. Perhaps,' I added, 'you do not know either that he was supposed to marry Captain Macedoine's daughter? She turned him out. They were on the Island of Ipsilon together.'

"I don't know," said Mr. Spenlove, "how I expected him to take this, but I was surprised at his composure. I did not take into adequate consideration the fact that women were not the same phenomena to him that they were to me. I forgot the 'four others' who were being kept in loose boxes, so to speak, out of a deference to that complex yet extremely admirable reluctance of his to abandon those who had reposed in the broad shadow of his pro-

Digitized by Google

tection and who had been honoured by his august notice. I have never been able, by the by, to make up my mind whether I myself admired or loathed this singular idiosyncrasy.

"'You mean,' he questioned, quietly, 'that she was his mistress on the island?' I shook my head.

"'No,' I said, 'that's the very thing I don't mean. And as I told you, Nikitos has not that temperament. He makes rather a hobby of his own chastity.'

"M. Kinaitsky regarded me with interest. 'I mean,' I added, 'his emotions are his mistresses, so to speak. There *are* some men,' I went on in doubtful fashion, 'to whom women make no positive appeal. But perhaps. . . .'

"'Oh, undoubtedly!' he startled me by agreeing with sudden emphasis. 'Undoubtedly! But if not women, what?' he demanded.

"'Well,' I said, slowly, 'he struck me as being just what you describe him—in with some political crowd. I don't speak the language, you must remember, and have only a hazy notion of what all this trouble is about, but in the *Café Odéon* I gathered from various obscure hints that he was part of the show. And another thing, Monsieur, he certainly gave me to understand that he meditated some sort of revenge upon the person who had robbed him of this girl. That was how he put it, you know. He is

Digitized by Google

quite unable to believe that she detested him. He is ignorant of the details of her life lately, I may say. He even suspected me of having abducted her. Made some very violent threats, but I put that down to his mania for long words.'

"M. Kinaitsky looked at me with grave concern.

"'This is very serious,' he remarked at length, 'very serious. It is only a matter of days, hours, before he learns anything he wishes. The government at Constantinople have been most negligent in their attitude toward the revolutionary leaders here.'

"'What alarms you?' I enquired.

"'Everything!' he returned, getting up and walking to and fro on the polished parquetry flooring, his arms folded, his head bent. 'Everything!' He halted suddenly in his advance toward the far end of the room which opened upon a small byzantine balcony and looked at me over his shoulder.

"'I believe,' he said, slowly, 'that you are entirely trustworthy——'

"'I feel flattered,' I murmured.

"'But for one thing,' he went on, 'I cannot account to myself for your connection with Mademoiselle Macedoine. I ask myself—what is he doing there? I cannot answer.'

"'Why are you so anxious about a thing like that when you have so many cares?' I demanded.

Digitized by Google

"'Because,' said he, 'I wish to make use of you. The news you bring me to-night is, to me personally, by reason of my position here as an Ottoman subject, extremely important. I propose to you that you take a package of papers to my brother in London. I shall leave for Constantinople by the four o'clock train tomorrow. If you will call here at three to-morrow I will have them ready for you and will see you safe to your ship where no doubt you have a safe on board. I can assure you that when you deliver these papers to my brother he will reimburse you for your trouble. Or if you prefer——'

"'No,' I said, 'I will do it with pleasure for nothing.'

"'Impossible,' he retorted, gravely, coming up to the table again. 'It is a commission and will be generously rewarded."

"'You anticipate trouble then?' I suggested.

"'Monsieur,' said he, 'I anticipate the worst kind of trouble. I have known of it for some time, but the happenings of to-night prove that I was mistaken as to the time.'

"'It will be better if I know nothing about it,' I said. 'I will call at three or earlier. I have an appointment ashore to-morrow afternoon but I can come here first.'

"'You go to Mademoiselle Macedoine, perhaps?' I nodded. 'Give her my respects,' he murmured, re-

Digitized by Google

garding me steadily. 'My respects. It would be impertinent no doubt to refer again to your own future movements?'

"And you know," said Mr. Spenlove, breaking off in his narrative abruptly, "I had no words to reply. I was stricken with a species of intellectual consternation at the incredible gulf which separated me from that man emotionally. I was staggered by the vision which persistently came before me of those four unknown women, quite possibly beautiful young women, though of this I had no actual proof, dwelling in discreet seclusion and serving no useful purpose in the world beyond the gratification of a plutocrat's ego-mania. If that can be called useful. And there was also, in addition to these, this girl whom I knew. Five of them: and they were not even permitted to be wicked! And I had to wrestle with this outrageous problem of our relative status as human beings at the same time that my own attitude toward this girl was assuming an intensely personal character. My soul, or that fugitive and ineluctable entity which does duty for a sailorman's soul, was stamping up and down inside of me, waving its arms, protesting with all its suddenly released energy against this man, denying him any knowledge of what we call love, at all. I wanted to assail him with denunciations for the monstrous self-esteem which sentenced those

Digitized by Google

delicate creatures to a shadowy and volitionless stagnation. I accused him of the destruction of their immortal souls, forgetting in my romantic warmth that in all probability he didn't believe they had any. But of course, being an Englishman, I remained perfectly quiescent and inarticulate. I believe I reached for another cigarette before picking up my hat. And I dare say I smiled. We have peculiar ways of defending ourselves in such crises. He assumed a puzzled air as he held out his hand.

"'Englishmen are ice,' he remarked, 'where women are concerned. I have frequently observed it. *Sang froid* as we say in French. The phrase must have been inspired by the contemplation of an Englishman. . . . '

'And we shook hands. I said nothing, which doubtless confirmed him in his illusions about us. But the point is, I was equally mistaken about him, I could not believe him capable of what we call love. I was, as I say, mistaken. But as I followed him out to the front of his house, where his patient minions waited with lanterns which shed flickering rays over enormous shrubs and about the trunks of tall cypresses, and stood at length beside a fantastic barouche, with a sleepy driver on the box, I had a moment of illumination. I asked myself why I applied this test of love to a man like him, a man

Digitized by Google

in the midst of extraordinary predicaments—a man who perhaps had suffered the pangs of hell for love and had recovered, who quite possibly had run up and down the whole gamut of human emotions while I was idiotically spending my years tinkling on a couple of notes. The stupid injustice of my interior anger came home to me, and I sought again for the reason why I demanded of him my own occidental idealism. The answer struck me as unexpectedly as a sudden blow. It was because of my own attitude toward the girl. As I took my seat in the carriage and reached out mechanically to shake hands once more, I saw her as clearly as though she were there before me, the bought chattel of a cultivated polygamist, and the blood rushed to my head in a sudden surge. I leaned back as the horses started at the crack of the whip. I felt sick and humiliatingly impotent. I saw Love and Romance for what they are in this iron world of ours—ragged outcasts shivering in the streets, the abject dependents of the rich. And I saw myself for what I was, too, for the matter of that, a reed shaken by the winds of desire, an emotional somnambulist terrified at the apparition of his own destiny."

"No," said Mr. Spenlove in reply to a murmured protest, "I am not libelling humanity at all. We are a

Digitized by Google

very fine lot of fellows, no doubt. As I mentioned a little while ago, the new generation seem to be a distinct advance in evolutionary types over us older and more imperfect organisms. To watch a modern youth with a woman, to hear him recount his extensive and peculiar experiences with women, to study his detached and factory-built emotions toward women—the outcome of our modern craze for quantity-production, is an instructive and somewhat alarming pastime for one weathering middle age. An improvement, of course. All progress means that, I am informed. But I am not telling you the adventures of a super-man, only a super in the play. What? No, I didn't run down love, as you call it, at all. My quarrel was not with love, or even the sexual manifestation of it which preoccupies you all so much. I simply doubted your knowledge of it. I suggested that the majority of men never know very much about it save in a scared and furtive fashion. I hinted that you never fully realized the terrific importance of romantic ideas in the world; that you make a joke of the whole business, filling your rooms with pictures of well-nourished young women in amorous poses, filling your minds with mocking travesties and sly anecdotes of those great souls who have left us the records of their emotional storms and ship-wrecks. I am

Digitized by Google

telling you the story of Captain Macedoine's daughter. Eh? Well, I am coming to that . . . it seems we shall be here till morning.

"It once occurred to me," he went on, meditatively, "that a good deal of the unreality of people in books is due to the homogeneity of their emotions. A man in love, for example, is in love right to the end, or to the point where the mechanism of the story renders it necessary to introduce another state of affairs. Anybody who has been in love, or cherished a hatred, or espoused a doctrine, or done anything invoking the deep chords, knows that this is not so. There is the reaction. When I got aboard the *Manola* once more and stood in the middle of my stuffy little cabin on the port side of the engine hatch, I was a cold and discouraged pessimist. The oil lamp on my table showed me my domain. A cockroach was making its way methodically round and round a covered plate of sandwiches, while its brother or possibly a distant relation was enjoying a good tuck-in of the cocoa at the bottom of a cup. Down below I heard the bang of a bucket, and I reflected that the donkeyman, after cleaning his fires and sweeping his tubes, was washing himself in the stokehold. The night watchman in the galley was drying heavy flannels over the stove and the warm, offensive odour hung in the air. On the big mirror which I

Digitized by Google

have mentioned, I saw a memorandum written with a piece of soap: 'Steering Gear.' I recalled that I must get the Mate to take up the slack in his tiller-head in the morning. I was overwhelmed with the hard, gritty facts of existence, an existence the most discouraging and drab on earth I imagine, unless one has some fine romantic ideal before one. And I stood there, irresolute, looking at my figure in the glass, which reminded me of a badly painted ancestral portrait, and wondered whether I was capable of a fine romantic ideal. There lies the trouble with most of us, I fancy. We lose our youth and we fail to lay hold of the resolution of manhood. And before we know it we have drifted moodily into forlorn byways of sensuality. . . .

"Because I knew that if I went to see that girl next day I could no longer maintain a detached air of being a kind of benevolent and irresponsible guardian. All the unusual and melodramatic happenings of the evening were unable to blind me to the basic fact that our relations had changed, and I dared not follow them, even in thought, to their logical consequences. And yet I dared not retreat. I had that much imaginative manhood! I could not face a future haunted by her questing, derisive, contemptuous smile. As I lay down and watched the lamp giving out its last spasmodic flickers before it left me

Digitized by Google

in darkness, I thought I saw her, say a year hence, in a vague yet dreadful environment, halting her racing thoughts to remember for a moment the man who had failed her in a time of need. I saw the shrug and the sudden turn of the shoulders, the curl of the lip, the evanescent flash of the eyes. . . . No, I couldn't do it. And I couldn't forego the exquisite seduction of a future glowing with the iridescent colours of romantic folly. . . .

"And so," said Mr. Spenlove, after one of his pauses, "I went."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII

AND for those who make a hobby of the irony of fate, I remember that but for the innocent and haphazard intervention of a perfectly irrelevant individual, I shouldn't have been able to get ashore at all. I woke early. For some mysterious reason connected with tonnage, the old *Manola* had a small bathroom at the after end of the bridge deck, a most unusual appurtenance in a tramp steamer of her day, as some of you fellows know well enough. I had fixed up a contraption by which I could pump sea water through a home-made shower. I was in this place having a wash down and towelling vigorously when I heard the steward talking to the cook outside the porthole. He was saying that he was going ashore to the market to get some fresh green stuff and the cook was to tell the old man that he would be back by eight o'clock. The steward, an extremely quiet and modest creature with the ferocious name of Tonderbeg, was standing close by, and the blue wreathes from his cigarette curled into the port. He looked up and saw me, making a

Digitized by Google

slight bow and smile, and raising his hand in an automatic way to the salute.

"'Goot morning, Mister Chief,' he said. 'A fine morning, Sir.' I conceded this and asked him if it was far to the market.

"'Not far. Just a nice walk for a morning like dis, Sir. A very interesting place, the market. In the Old Town.'

"'Well', I said, 'if you'll wait a few minutes, I'll take a walk up there with you.'

"His good-looking blond features became suffused with a warm gratification and his Teutonic voice went back into his throat, as it were.

"'W'y,' he announced, impressively, 'it would be a pleasure, Mister Chief. I'll chust get de sailor wid de bag.' And he disappeared.

"And I was mysteriously elated. It is useless to attempt any analysis of those fugitive gleams of the future which occasionally distract our minds. Nevertheless I recall it now with irresistible conviction—I was mysteriously elated. I filled my case with cigarettes, took my cap and stick, went back for a handkerchief, and slipped a couple of sovereigns into my pocket with the idea, I suppose, of purchasing fruit. I found my friend Tonderbeg standing by the gangway talking to the Captain. Jack had come up in his pajamas, a remarkable suit of broad

Digitized by Google

purple and saffron stripes, and he stood there yawning and rubbing his massive hairy bosom.

"'Why, where you been, Fred?' he demanded, slyly, 'I'm surprised at you. I thought you was a respectable man.'

"'Well, Jack,' I said, 'as far as I know, I am.' He looked at me for a moment, his head thrown back, his powerful hands flat on his breast, and his big bloodshot brown eyes twinkled.

"'You know what I mean, Fred,' he muttered. 'I'm only jokin'. When are you comin' back? I'm goin' up to the agent's at ten.'

"'Oh, we'll be back to breakfast. It isn't six yet.'

"As we walked along the quays, I looked out beyond the tiny harbour in which the *Manola* was berthed. The waters of the Gulf lay like a sheet of planished steel beneath a canopy of lead-coloured clouds. A couple of steamers at anchor, their bows pointing toward us, were reflected with uncanny exactitude in the motionless water below them. And away beyond lay the sullen and bleak masses of the Chalcidice and the far watershed of the Vardar, leading the eye at length to the immense, snow-streaked peak of Olympos, flushing as some majestic woman might flush, in the first rays of the sun, hidden as yet behind the symmetrical cone of Mount Athos. I discovered that I had stopped to look at all this

Digitized by Google

and I realized with a slight shock that Mr. Tonderbeg was expressing his approval. He said it was very fine.

"'You admire scenery?' I asked him as we walked on.

"'Very much,' he assured me. 'But by scenery I mean mountains. They are very elevating, in my opinion, Mister Chief. Where I come from, Schleswig, you know, we have very fine mountains.' And he coughed deferentially behind his hand.

"'What's your notion of being elevated?' I enquired.

"'Well, Mister Chief,' he said in a deep tone, 'it is only natural for a respectable man to improve himself, and to cultivate his mind, if you know what I mean. And I find good scenery very improving. It gives me good ideas. When I come to all dese different places I write home to a little friend o' mine and tell all about it.'

"'What does your friend think about it?' He smiled.

"'Well, Mister Chief, when I say a little friend o' mine, I mean my gel in North Shields, you understand. She's a school teacher, very well educated. Yes, I should say she's had a splendid education. She writes me very fine letters. A fine thing, education, Mister Chief. For shore people, of course.

Digitized by Google

People like you an' me, goin' to sea, don't get it. But I think a man ought to improve himself and cultivate his mind. This way up to the market.'

"I regarded Mr. Tonderbeg with a perfectly sincere respect. On board ship his efficiency had been of that extreme kind which causes one to lose sight altogether of the individual responsible for it. He had so merged himself into the routine of the day that one had difficulty in realizing his existence. And in the mood I was in that morning, a mood of reckless emotional adventure, I found a certain wicked pleasure in teasing him into a foolish loquacity. He was evidently very anxious to talk to someone about his little friend. She corrected his mistakes in English grammar, I learned, for he mournfully confessed to many errors in writing. But what impressed me about him was the astounding familiarity he seemed to have with his destiny. He knew that an old friend, a retired sea-captain, would give him a job as assistant steward in a certain 'home' for the indigent mariner. He knew that in time he would become steward, which would provide a job for his wife. He saw right on into his middle age. For all I know he knew just about when he would die and where he would go afterward. And he was a good ten years younger than I was! All mapped out! There seemed to be as much adventure in the future

Digitized by Google

for him as for a young and exemplary vegetable. He would grow old, and the young person who had been afflicted with a splendid education would grow old with him, immured in the discreet official quarters of the home for indigent seamen. As if a seaman were ever anything else but indigent! And when I suggested that a trifle more pay for the seaman would render the home unnecessary he put his head on one side and explained tolerantly that they 'would only spend it on booze.'

"'And better do that and die dead drunk than end up in a home,' I muttered. He didn't hear me, I am glad to think now. I should have regretted the slightest scratching of the immaculate surface of his respectable equanimity. He was certainly thrown off his balance a few moments later, and it is quite possible that had he heard my subversive remark he might have abandoned me as hopeless. He maintained on the voyage home the attitude of a deeply religious parent mourning for a reprobate son, but not without hopes for his ultimate reclamation.

"I think our conversation ended there. I remember we were passing up a rather narrow and smelly street where donkeys, with immense panniers of vegetables, were continually fouling each other, and then pausing with infuriating composure while their

Digitized by Google

fezzed proprietors wrenched them apart. And I remember Mr. Tonderbeg insinuating himself past them in a manner perfectly decorous and suitable in a foreigner among natives, yet accompanied by an expression on his blond features which seemed to betray a regretfully low estimate of a population deficient in the ability to improve themselves and cultivate fine ideas. I say I remember this because the next time I looked at him his expression had changed. He had flushed to a dark terra-cotta, his eyes were cast down, and his mouth was curled into an extraordinary and complex sneer and grin. 'Des women!' he said, hoarsely. 'They won't let you alone. Impudent pieces!' And he stopped at a fish stall. I was going to ask him what he was talking about when I saw what had outraged his modesty. It was Pollyni Sarafov, a big basket in her hand, standing in front of a booth on the further side of the market and waving to attract my attention. I gave Mr. Tonderbeg a glance as I left him, abandoned him. He did not see me. He was still standing at the fish stall examining a number of loathsome cuttle fish who were regarding him with a fixed and terrible stare from among their many arms. I went straight over to the girl.

"Mind, I don't blame Mr. Tonderbeg very much. There was something about that girl which would

Digitized by Google

give a man like him all sorts of alarming thoughts. She would not elevate him. She was the negation of respectability. Her shining bronze hair was tied up in a scarf of blue silk, her cotton dress was shockingly short, and her feet were shod with a pair of old Turkish slippers. And her basket contained a miscellaneous assortment of esoteric comestibles which would later appear in an astonishingly appetizing form at the table. She greeted me with a naïve delight, a tacit confidence that I shared her view of the situation, and had managed to meet her by some tremendous *tour-de-force* of romantic intuition.

"'And who's that man?' she demanded, nodding toward the respectable Tonderbeg. I looked at him. He was sidling along the booths, followed by an impassive seaman with a neatly rolled sack under his arm, and he was glancing stealthily in our direction, his features almost dark with shame.

"'That's our steward,' I told her. 'He doesn't think much of you. He thought you were giving him the glad eye, I'm afraid.'

"'Him!' she queried, and regarded him for a moment. And then she changed the subject. She wished to know if I was going up to see Artemisia. And when I hinted at the early hour, she declared that it was a good time. She would be so glad, she thought. And when she said she was ready, having

Digitized by Google

bought all she needed, and that a carriage was waiting for her up the hill near the *Via Egnatia*, I took her basket and we moved on. And we left Mr. Tonderbeg behind, left him full of the inward rage which boils up when envy and decorum are run together in our hearts. There was nothing the matter with him, understand. I mean, there was nothing one could do for him. He was one of those bland human organisms who simply fly right off the handle when they encounter a foreign morality. It's an ethnical problem, I suppose. Why do I tell you of this Tonderbeg? Irrelevant? Well, but he wouldn't have been, if I had carried out the momentous scheme I had in mind. I thought you would have grasped that. And I sometimes wonder whether his respectable mind had not elucidated some inkling of this from a word perhaps overheard as he passed the captain's door, on the voyage home, and nursed a grievance against fate for depriving him of that piquant experience which I had had in store for him!

"And when we had climbed into the grubby little hired hack, a very different vehicle from Mr. Kinaitsky's patrician affair, and the die seemed definitely cast, I found myself recalling again and again a remark which old Jack Evans had made his own. 'A man's a damn fool to bother with a gel at all, unless he's going to marry her!' The ripe fruit of his ex-

Digitized by Google

perience in the world! I had agreed with him, too. I recalled his short, stout, unromantic figure standing in an authoritative attitude with his hand on the rail, looking across the blue glitter of the Mediterranean, seeing nothing of it, dreaming of that semi-detached affair in Threxford which contained the angel child and her desiccated mother. It is easy enough and indicative of wisdom to agree in such cases. But I would remind you that I had no such dream of the future in *my* head as I sat beside this foreign girl and drove along the *Via Egnatia* to meet Captain Macedoine's daughter once more. With more experience of the world of sentiment I might possibly have gone so far as to envisage the probable outcome of the adventure. But the point is that for all my thirty-five years, I had no such experience at all. And women are quick as lightning to perceive this. You can bring them nothing which they prize with such tender solicitude as a mature and inexperienced heart. Neither callow adolescence nor a smart worldly knowledge of their own weaknesses is any match for it. And why? Well, I imagine it is because they feel safe without losing any of the perilous glamour of love. It gives the fundamental maternal instinct in their bosoms full scope without embarrassing them with either a puling infant or a doddery prodigal. It may even play up to a rudi-

Digitized by Google

mentary desire to be not merely the agent of an instinct but the inspiration of an individual. Cleverness in a woman is very often only the objective aspect of fidelity to an ideal.

"You may imagine I said nothing of this to the girl beside me. Instead I asked her when she was going to get married, and she said 'By and by.' When he came, not before. It was obvious that she awaited her destiny without misgiving and that she was at that stage when women really love vicariously or not at all. For she suddenly demanded if I was going to take Artemisia away to England when my ship sailed. We had turned out of the noisy *Via Egnatia* and were climbing a steep, narrow street leading toward the citadel, a street of an extraordinary variety of architecture, whose houses lunged out over the roadway in coloured balconies and bellying iron grilles. And the whole barbaric vista led the eye inexorably upward till it caught the culminating point of a lofty and slender minaret springing from a clump of cypresses and glittering white in the morning sun. The street itself was still in cool shadow, and at the doors, kneeling upon the fantastic little *pavés* of mosaic, or rubbing pieces of polished brass, were bare-footed women with picturesque dresses and formidable ankles.

"Yes, she wanted to know, but I discovered just

Digitized by Google

then that a man may work himself up to a certain high resolution without feeling either proud or happy. One seems to go into great affairs in a kind of pre-occupied daze. It is possible the Latin, the Celt, and the Slav have the power to visualize themselves objectively when they assume an heroic character. We are singularly deficient in this respect, I observe. No Englishman is a hero to himself. And a merciless analyst might go so far as to say that my entire behaviour was no more estimable than M. Kinaitsky's, that I had but one selfish motive, which was to protect myself from a woman's contempt. Viewed at a distance, I believe there was more in me than that. There is a radiant glow about it all, for me, which convinces that for once I had laid hold of the real thing. A magnificent memory! It is something, I submit, to cherish in one's heart even a solitary episode untarnished by any ignoble shame.

"'You shall see, my dear,' I said, enigmatically, and then the carriage stopped with a jerk and she appeared in a suddenly opened doorway, bursting out, as it were, holding herself back with her hands on the posts and devouring me with a look of extraordinary questing delight. It was as though she wished to divine the very roots of my emotions. I sat there, a tongue-tied fool, until Pollyni pushed me

Digitized by Google

gently. Why didn't I get out? So I got out and stood before her.

"She was changed. I suppose I ought to have had the wit to expect that, but the fact remains that my first feeling was astonishment. She stood a foot or so above me on the doorstep, and this vantage, together with a species of gravity in her demeanour, conveyed an impression of tall aloofness. As she stood there, composed and curious, in a loose blue gown and her hair spread around her shoulders, the fine pale olive of her forearms emerging and her fingers lightly laced, one thought of vestal virgins, priestesses of obscure cults, and of the women who figure in the fantastic stories of the Middle Ages. She was changed, and the difficult element in the case was that she seemed to have changed for the better. And suddenly the old familiar derisive smile broke, the white teeth drew in the red lower lip, and she put her hand on my shoulder. 'Come in,' she said in a low voice. 'I never really believed you would come at all! And, Polly dear,' she added to the girl in the carriage, 'won't you come up later and we'll go out—you know——' and she waved her hand upward.

"'I'll come,' said Miss Sarafov with decision, and spoke rapidly to the driver, who turned his horses round and began the descent to the *Via Egnatia*.

Digitized by Google

"'So you have come at last,' said Captain Macedoine's daughter, as we reached a small room opening on a balcony above. There was another small room behind and this seemed to be the extent of her domain.

"'Yes,' I said, 'and now I am here, tell me what you think of it all.'

"'Think of what?' she demanded, sitting down near me.

"'Well,' I replied, 'of our relations chiefly. What am I supposed to be? What do you want of me? You see,' I went on, slowly, 'I have thought a great deal about you ever since you called me to London. A great deal, I assure you. But I am not a very courageous person, my dear, and I am afraid of my thoughts running away from me. I should not like you to think me a fool, you know.'

"'I should never do that,' she remarked in a low murmur. 'You are my true friend, I know.'

"'And what is a true friend to do for a girl in your position?' I asked, bluntly, looking round the tiny chamber with its red and white tiled floor and octagonal tables. She looked at me for a moment and then out of the window, and sighed.

"'Aren't you happy here?' I asked. She continued to look out of the window while she answered me.

Digitized by Google

"'Do you want me to be quite plain?' she enquired. 'Well, then, I will tell you that except this,' and she made a gesture indicating her surroundings, 'there is nothing for me to do. If I leave here where shall I go? This is a funny place, I can tell you. And this won't last forever, either, even if I wanted it to.'

"'But why can't you go and look after your father?' I asked, helplessly.

"'Because I told him a lot of lies about being married,' she said, sharply, 'and I would rather die than tell him I'm somebody's keep.'

"'You needn't have said that,' I said, unsteadily, 'and you needn't tell him anything of the sort. Tell him just whatever you please and I will back you up and make it the truth.'

"'What makes you say I needn't have said it?' she asked, looking full at me. 'You asked, didn't you?'

"'Well, it hurt me for one thing,' I told her, 'and for another, being bitter won't help matters. Do you suppose I haven't a pretty good idea of your situation here? And if I hadn't had any intention of helping you, why should I have come? I promised you I would always be your friend, because I had never met any one so forlorn. And I will keep that promise to the limit. And now,' I added, 'suppose I told you what happened last night.'

"She sat perfectly still, watching me while I re-

Digitized by Google

counted my singular adventure with M. Kinaitsky. It was only when I mentioned what he had said of her being quite free to dispose of herself that she gave a quick, sarcastic shrug.

"'I know,' she said. 'So he told me when he got married. But this is a funny place, I can tell you. You think I can walk out of this house and do what I like, get a job, rent a house? I can't. He knows well enough I'm stuck here unless I go to the *Omphale* or the *Ottoman House*, or one of those horrible places. And then,' she added, 'it wouldn't be long before I'd be sitting in the *Odéon* half the night and wishing I was dead.'

"'You know,' I said, severely, 'that if you had the slightest intention of doing anything of the sort you wouldn't breathe a word of it to me of all people.'

"For a moment she held out, smirking a little.

"'You fancy yourself,' she said, quoting a by-gone London phrase.

"'To that extent,' I insisted. 'What do you suppose I came up here for? Why did I wander all over Saloniki last night trying to find you? To hear you say things like that? What do you suppose I am made of? Listen!'

"I don't suppose men often tell a woman the things I told her then, but it was imperative that I should clear away the difficulties between us. I had

Digitized by Google

to convince her that I was not to be humbugged by her fatal inherited proclivity for a grandiose emotional rôle, a proclivity for playing up to some mysterious imaginary being which she labelled herself and strove to erect in the mind of her protagonist. It wouldn't do. There was something numbing in the spectacle of her attempt to present herself as already a painted shadow in the purlieus of a Levantine city. In the long blue dressing gown, against a lemon-tinted stone wall, the morning sun irradiating the exquisite, exotic face, she had an adult air, so to speak, an air of lovely maturity and grave virtue. I would say she looked much more like a saint than a sinner, if I could reach any satisfactory conclusions as to the nature of a saint. I talked, as they say, straight, and the culmination of my invective was a blunt statement about her intelligence.

"'You aren't clever enough to be as bad as you try to make out,' I said, and she looked down at her hands.

"'All the same,' she remarked almost to herself, 'you are taking an awful risk in talking to me like this. How do you know I shouldn't go—go to pot altogether, later on? I'm thinking of you, you know,' she added.

"'There you go again!' I exclaimed. She put up her hand as a token of surrender, and there came into

Digitized by Google

her voice that unforgettably alluring timbre which, as I told you before, evoked mysterious memories and invested her with an extraordinary quality which one might almost describe as spiritual iridescence, a glamour of sybillant charm and delicious abandon."

. . . . . .

"And there, you know," said Mr. Spenlove in a low tone, "the story ought to finish. That's where, when I recall the whole history of Captain Macedoine's daughter, I should like it to finish—on a final note of a supreme memory of that day. I would have had it forever wrapped in the gracious radiance of romance. Which, I suppose, is more than is granted to any of us. So, though it would not do for me to break the silence in which one buries the fragrant bodies of dead moments, there is something more to tell. Of M. Nikitos, for example, and the reproaches, courteously worded, of M. Kinaitsky. . . .

"We went for what in England we would call a picnic. Pollyni came back about ten, in a fresh carriage whose driver had celebrated a day's contract by coloured ribbons on the horses' head-stalls and a dark red rose thrust over one of his own ears, in bizarre contrast to the almost incredible dilapidation of his clothes. An old woman, whose features were

Digitized by Google

shrivelled to the colour and consistency of a peeled walnut, placed between our feet a basket out of which stuck the necks of wine bottles. I didn't ask where we were going, for I didn't care. I remember, however, demanding an explanation of the heavy explosions which had begun somewhere in the neighbourhood, and their telling me it was a blasting party in a quarry just behind the houses and outside the city wall. And I recall another incident, when we reached the barrier at the Great Tower, where a squad of fezzed and moustached guards debated among themselves the wisdom of permitting us to pass out. Very serious, not to say uneasy, they seemed, the heavy explosions causing them to look over their shoulders apprehensively even while they held their bayonets, long, sharp, unpleasant affairs, across the breasts of the horses. But finally they let us go, and after a half hour or so of the boulevards we came to a road leading across the plain to a town a few miles away. That is a memory, too—the wide plain of pale saffron earth, the dancing blue sea, the turquoise sky piled here and there with immense snowy billowings of autumn clouds, the girdle of grim and inaccessible peaks, and the compact little town of white houses buried in a circular plaque of foliage in the middle distance. And then at the roadside, squatting on their haunches with their rifles between

Digitized by Google

their knees, very dusty and enigmatic, lines of soldiers on the march. I remember it as one remembers an unusual dream, a vague blur behind the sharper memories that intervene.

"And out of the mists of impressions came the fact that we were going to this toy town in the middle distance to visit Pollyni's uncle, a gentleman who had been to America also, and having dug trenches for drains and conduits in New York City for a year or two, had returned and bought the principal café in the village. There was a moment when the place lost the qualities of a water-colour painting and began to assume the aspects of reality, when the homogeneous colouring of the land became broken up into tobacco fields and vineyards and vegetable patches, with an occasional pony walking round a mediæval contraption which brought minute buckets of water up from a well and trickled them into a wooden sluice. And these in turn gave place to a sketchy and winding earthen road which twisted among shabby houses with forlorn sheds in which tobacco leaves hung drying on poles, and fowls pecked in a disillusioned fashion while they meditated upon the formidable problem of existence. And then we passed houses standing aloof and forbidding, shut up, apparently uninhabited, houses which had quite simply tumbled down for lack of support,

Digitized by Google

houses with the front door upstairs, and houses without any doors at all as far as one could see. We passed them and our driver cracked his whip with great energy, the horses stumbled against big stones or into rain gullies, an occasional human stared woodenly at us; and suddenly we came round an intricate curve of the street and we were in the little square of the village, a square canopied by an immense tree and overhanging eaves. In the centre stood a worn old well-curb where bare-legged girls fished up dripping petroleum cans and staggered across to open doors, most of the water running unregarded through a hole in the bottom. If you could call it a square, when it had six or seven irregular sides, with the streets running into it in a furtively tangential fashion and the corners of it cool and dark even at noon-tide under that patriarchal tree which had been planted by a patriarch, no doubt, while he was digging the well. This was the end of our journey, where we got out, and the carriage rumbled away into the green gloom beyond to some convenient stable, while we were welcomed by a gentleman with a soft voice and very loud western clothing like that affected by race-track folk, who stood in front of an extremely vacant looking café. He had a watch-chain with massive gold links and an enormous obsolete gold coin depending

Digitized by Google

from his coat lapel. His boots were shiny and globular of toe, and I gathered, as the day wore on, that he represented Occidental Prosperity in that simple community and was charitably excused from such glaring solecisms on that ground. They found no fault with him for having an adventurous spirit which had carried him to the Country of the Mad beyond the sea, for he had shown his ultimate wisdom by coming back to live in a civilized part of the world. In fact, by the way they drifted in during the afternoon and sat at adjacent tables while he held forth bilingually upon his experiences in a Hoboken sewer, it was evident that in addition to being a stout burgess of the township, he was a species of Sinbad to them, with preposterous but intriguing stories of subterranean cities where vast and brilliant chariots roared through interminable passages; of heaven-scaling towers where myriads fought for silks and jewels, for gold and silver, for purple and fine linen; of streets above which insane railway trains hurtled and shrieked and groaned as they carried the demented inhabitants on endless journeys to nowhere in particular for no ascertainable reasons. For mind you, they displayed no desire whatever to emulate the daring feats of those who had gone to America. They sat there for a time, smoking *narghilehs* or cigarettes, looking thoughtfully at the

Digitized by Google

floor between their outlandish shoes, and then drifted away to attend, it is to be presumed, to various affairs. I doubt whether my confirmation of these improbabilities was of much avail in convincing them that he was not simply exercising the ancient rights of the teller of tales, and striving to terrify them with stories of genii in bottles and carpets that flew through the air. And he certainly had no intention of going back. He had 'enough mon' now,' he remarked, 'and who but a lunatic would ever venture into such a pandemonium save for the purpose of getting "mon".' The bare idea of living permanently in that country and exposing one's soul to the destructive action of their peculiar political ideas had never entered his head. They had called him 'a crazy mutt' because, forsooth, he had quit when his belt was sufficiently loaded with 'mon'. Now why should they do that? Why should he go on living in hell when he had the price of paradise strapped about his middle? It was a baffling problem. Yet they did it. Even now, as he spoke, out there across the world, millions of people on an island the size of Ipsilon or even smaller than Naxos, were rushing to and fro like maniacs. For of course he was under the impression that Manhattan, with the adjacent coast beyond the river, was all there was of America. For all he knew the subway ran to

Digitized by Google

San Francisco and New Orleans was a mile or two below Staten Island. Listening to him, it was perfectly easy to visualize the growth of ancient tales of foreign parts. When I think of him nowadays, and observe the noise and chaffering of political people who are vociferously claiming for such as he what they call self-determination or what in those illiterate days was known as autonomy, I am constrained to a great amazement. We shall see some strange signs and portents later, if I am not in error.

"For if there is one thing more than another which one gets from this old land, it is the conviction that it will not cease to be old because a few zealots march round it blowing the trumpets of a new and incomprehensible thing called Liberty. It is an amiable but disastrous illusion on the part of the western nations that they have created a monopoly in freedom and truth and the right conduct of life. As I have adumbrated to you more than once, I am not so sure of all this. The hoarse, guttural voice of Grünbaum, whom the high priests of Liberty set against a wall the other day and shot dead, comes back to me across the years. 'An illusion, founded on a misconception.' Well, I wouldn't call that an entirely true definition of democracy as we in the west understand it. But if you took this late resi-

Digitized by Google

dent of Hoboken, now safely restored to his traditional environment, I should certainly say that your wonderful democracy was of no more use to him than some fabulously expensive and delicate scientific instrument, or the Bodleian Library at Oxford, or the Elgin marbles would be. The trouble is, you see, that so many of us in the world, inarticulate for the most part, don't want your progress, your tremendous journeys through the air, your new religions, or your improved breakfast foods. And we could endure even such a war as is going on now, if we only had peace in our hearts. For peace is not a merely negative thing, the absence of strife. It is something in itself, something you could definitely discern in the atmosphere of that forgotten village of the plain, under that patriarchal tree, audible in the clucking of the fowls under one's feet, and in the gurgle of the water the girls hauled up from the dank darkness of the old well. I recall one moment, after our meal in the late afternoon, as we sat on the little balcony above the café, smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee and mastic. A drowsy stillness had come over the place, as though it had been secretly enchanted. Over the way an old gentleman reposed in a chair outside his shop, asleep, a yellow cat in his arms. On the curb of the well a young girl sat swinging one leg as she peered down thoughtfully into the water. A pigeon

Digitized by Google

cooed in the cot under the eaves near by. There was a low murmur of conversation from a neighbouring room where Pollyni was talking to her aunt, a large shy person, preoccupied with household cares. And gradually I seemed to lose my grip of reality altogether and passed into a kind of passionless ecstasy of existence, where everything which puzzles us in ordinary life presented a perfectly simple and amiable solution. One of the commonplaces of enchantment, I suppose. I became aware of Artemisia saying dreamily: 'That was a loud one. I shouldn't have thought we could hear them over here.' And I nodded, remembering a distant and heavy detonation. It was slowly dawning on my mind as I sat and smoked and murmured, that it was really quite impossible for the quarry-charges to be heard so far. 'But what could it be?' she asked, rousing. 'A gun perhaps. Sometimes ships come from the Bosphorus and fired shots in the Gulf. A long way off, of course. Perhaps a ship had come.' I told her what her father had said the night before, that a war might come soon. She nodded and was silent a moment before saying: 'I've heard that. Mrs. Sarafov said it might and she was sorry because nobody was ever any better off. They fight because the taxes are so heavy, and after the war the taxes are worse than ever, to pay for the war. She told me

Digitized by Google

how the soldiers came home to Sofia after winning a war with the next country—I forget which—and there was a grand triumphal march through the streets, and then the soldiers discovered there was nothing for them to eat and they broke loose. Everybody locked themselves up in their houses while the shooting went on in the streets.'

"'I believe,' I said, 'your father stands to make a lot of money out of this trouble when it comes.'

"She turned quickly toward me but without taking her arms from the ledge of the balcony, pressing her adorable chin against her arm.

"'I know this,' she said steadily, 'today has made it impossible to go back to my father. I don't mean for the reason that I mentioned this morning. Another reason.' And she sighed.

"'What is that reason?' I asked gently.

"'I'm a very unfortunate girl,' she muttered in a hoarse whisper, still looking steadily at me over her arm. 'I want to tell you so many things, and I can't, I can't.'

"'But tell me the reason,' I persisted.

"'Oh you must know . . . I must get clear of the past—and the present. I must not tell you the things I know. Let me alone . . . and perhaps in England I shall forget.'

"And after that, of course, nothing could befall us

Digitized by Google

save a silence, in which we endeavoured to adjust ourselves to the new emotion. For, mind you, I believe sometimes it would have worked out. She was a woman, and I believe that she would have conquered her destiny if she had gotten her chance. . . . No matter—a bald statement of belief gets us nowhere. So I shall remember her looking at me in her enchanting fashion over her arm, a light in her eyes like a light in the darkness at sea, flashing, and flashing and going out. . . .

"And it was after this silence had endured for a while that our attention was drawn from our own thoughts by a strange commotion. A number of the villagers suddenly appeared from round the corner of the street where we had come, preceding a carriage which moved slowly, being hampered by the people who pressed close to it all round. As if by magic the people of the houses opening upon the little square appeared at the doors and joined the crowd. And then, as the carriage arrived beneath us, it halted, and the horses looked round toward the well, and we saw on the seat of the carriage a man in some military uniform, a captain I imagine, lying diagonally across the vehicle, a handkerchief soaked in blood about his throat, a gash near one eye, and evidently a wound of some sort in the arm, for his hand, which pressed against the cushion, seemed to have adhered to it

Digitized by Google

with the blood running down the sleeve. The man's dark features had grown livid and his head lolled back with closed eyes and sagging mouth. And then Pollyni came in quickly to fetch us down, and we went.

"Our host, who stood by the carriage bareheaded and looking about him first toward one speaker and then another, gathering the scattered details of the story, had already sent a man away with a message, and he turned and came into the café, scratching his head and looking extremely serious. He said the officer was the son of his landlord, who lived on an estate at the far end of the town on the Seres Road. There had been a riot in the Israelite Quarter, the revolutionists had attacked a squad of soldiers going up to the garrison to change guard, and the military in clearing the streets had suffered some losses. The wounded man had been dragged from his horse and nearly killed before his men could rescue him. It was terrible for the old people. He had sent a messenger to prepare them. They would send for a doctor. Everything in Saloniki was in a bad way. Just as the carriage was well out of the city they heard a terrific explosion near the port, where the railway station was. Troops were already leaving for Monastir. And in reply to the question as to what we had better do, he eyed us reflectively and

Digitized by Google

said perhaps we'd better beat it back as quick as we could. He'd send for our carriage at once, if we liked. It was obvious that while he figured on handling the situation with credit and possibly profit, he had no desire to be hampered by our presence. And it was certainly my own idea, too, to get back. That 'explosion near the port' worried me a good deal. If the *Manola* were affected it would be necessary for me to be on hand.

"'This settles it,' I said in a low tone as we waited for the carriage. 'You must come with me. On the *Manola* you will be safe.' In those days, of course, even the shabby old Red Ensign was an inviolable sanctuary. She nodded without speaking. Indeed she did not speak for some time after we had quitted the tortuous streets of the village and were entering upon the open plain, merely regarding me in an earnest abstracted fashion, so that I was moved to ask the reason. For she had the air of one pondering upon a course of action already decided, trying to see where it would lead.

"'I was thinking,' she said, 'that it is funny you should be here, after all this time, and free to do—what you are doing. Most men, you know. . . .' and she stopped.

"'Most men what?' I demanded.

"'Oh, there's generally someone they like at

Digitized by Google

home, even if they aren't married. You aren't, are you?'

"It wasn't a rude or a cruel question as she put it to me. It was, on the other hand, shockingly pathetic, and humble. It registered the frightful defencelessness of her position at last. It went to my heart. It moved me so profoundly that I could think of nothing adequate to reply, and she stared into my eyes in the gathering evening twilight, her own eyes extremely bright and feverish, like distant storm signals.

"'Why torture yourself like this?' I asked at length. 'I happen to be that very common person, a man without ties.'

"'I'm not sure that that would be a recommendation to most girls,' she reflected, audibly, 'because they think people without ties aren't likely to contract any. But that isn't what I meant. When I was on the *Manola*, coming out to Ipsilon, I got it fixed in my head you were a widower. You know,' she went on, 'you never did talk about yourself, always about me; and I wondered and wondered and finally decided that you'd had a loss and didn't want to talk about it. And that made me sorry for you. And then you remember, up on the cliff you made me promise to let you help me, and you seemed so *experienced* . . . well, when I was at that

Digitized by Google

school you know, and we used to talk in the dormitory about the sort of men we wanted to marry, I used to say—"a widower, because." And once a big lump of a girl who was always passing exams said: "you mean because he has lived with a woman before," and I said, "a man didn't have to be married for that." It got to the mistresses' ears and I was nearly expelled.'

"She stopped, and I said 'Go on!'

"'Oh, I'll go on,' she said with a laugh, looking up at Pollyni, who was sitting beside the driver and explaining something involving a great deal of gesture. 'I can't say I was ever happy at school, but at any rate I must have done pretty well, because I was always sorry to go away.'

"'And where did you go?' I enquired.

"'Sometimes my father had a house at the seaside, sometimes in the country. He would have a yacht, with a party of people who were all paying guests, of course. Or he would take a moor and have people down. And again he would have a place in London.'

"'But do you mean to say your father fetched you home to spend your holidays among strangers?' I asked. 'I don't quite understand your father's attitude toward you.'

"'I wish I knew myself,' she muttered, looking at her foot. 'You know,' she went on, 'we have always

Digitized by Google

kept up a sort of arrangement in which he can't live without me and I am a passionately devoted daughter. I wouldn't tell any one else this,' she interpolated hurriedly in a whisper, 'but the fact is, I am not a passionately devoted daughter. I used to think I was. All the girls at school used to rave about their parents, so I raved about mine. Girls are fools,' she remarked, abruptly.

"'In what way—raving?' I asked.

"'Well,' she said, 'they go on and on, meaning no harm, I suppose. You know we used to tell each other we had the most wonderful sweethearts. One girl had a boy in New Zealand. Another was secretly engaged to a man who was in China. All very far away! So I wasn't to be done, and I bragged about a lover in Siberia. When they wanted to know about him I made up a long story. I said he was a Russian and I had met him in London and he'd gone back to Russia and got arrested and sent to Siberia. It was as true as their yarns, I dare say. And it's a fact I used to imagine myself in love with a tall fair man with a yellow beard. There was a Russian at father's house in Pimlico once, but he was an old cuckoo from the Consulate. I didn't like him.'

"'I don't think, my dear,' I said, 'that I want to know any more about it. I believe I understand.'

"'Yes,' she answered. 'I believe you do. I be-

Digitized by Google

lieved you would understand sooner or later, when I sent for you in London. I was a beast, then, but I don't regret it after all. I feel I could be anything to you, and you'd understand. Oh!' she muttered, clinging to me for a moment and staring across to where the sun, already set beyond the purple mountains, sent up broad bars of gold and crimson, reflected in the calm waters of the Gulf. 'Oh! How I have treated you!' and she sank into a silence of passionate regret that lasted until the darkness enfolded us and we had entered the long desolate *faubourg*."

Mr. Spenlove stopped and rose from his seat on his little camp-stool. Walking to and fro in front of the recumbent forms of his brother officers, his hands in his pockets, his head on his breast, he seemed once again to have forgotten them. And they, perceiving by this time the impropriety of mundane interruptions at such a moment, awaited his resumption in silence.

"After all," he remarked, suddenly stopping and staring down at the deck, "I lost her. I have said to you, at the beginning, that if her story means anything it means that love was nothing, and I had this in mind, for I lost her. And of what avail, I ask you, is an emotion so independent of our individual destinies that it can culminate at the very moment of disaster? It may be, of course, that what we call

Digitized by Google

love is only the bright shadow on earth of some ulterior celestial passion; but life is too short and too unsatisfactory for one to cultivate such an exalted faith. And we crave a little logic of Fate when we suffer. If, for example, the crazy Nikitos, true to his word, had suddenly appeared before us in that narrow street off the *Via Egnatia*, and destroyed her as many were destroyed that day, one could submit as to a sinister but tangible manifestation of human folly. But to have happened as it did . . . there was no sense in it. It was as though that girl, who had been from her birth a waif, the unhappy sport of spurious emotions, had angered Fate by stumbling upon something genuine after all, and was dismissed into the darkness in a moment of irascible petulance. And I suppose that I, if a man had any inherited right to expect that the law of compensation should be put in operation in his favour, should feel a grievance. But as I have remarked more than once, my attempts to be anything more than a super in the play have not been a shining success. So we can leave that out. There is no need to lose faith in Compensation because it is somewhat delayed. . . .

"But even from the standpoint of a detached and isolated event, there was nothing about it that a rational being could lay hold of for comfort. It was

Digitized by Google

just one blind evil chance out of a million possible ones. I did not even see it happen. I was doing something which has no connection with my past or following existence—watching an Ottoman soldier, probably an Anatolian, crumple up and expire in the gutter of the *Via Egnatia*. I was watching with the close attention one inevitably bestows upon one's first violent death—as a matter of fact, I had never seen any one die, even in bed—and remaining securely wedged in a doorway a few yards up the street. I remember him as he paused for an instant in a sort of ecstasy, his face turned up toward the harsh bright glare of a naked electric bulb that hung from a trolley pole, his body momentarily poised as though defying his destiny. And then he twisted about in an extraordinarily complicated manner and fell, all of a piece, while a number of extremely active persons tore past him without any sound save a popping noise far down the street. That would be near the market, I reflected in my doorway. And as we should have to go that way in order to reach the ship, it struck me that it would be my duty to find another route. And from that I went on to visualize the consternation of my friend Jack, when I turned up with the astonishing *entourage* of two women and a suitcase, and informed him of my determination. I had a tremendous desire to know, beforehand, just

Digitized by Google

what he would do and say. He would stand by an old friend of course. But how? And while I reflected in my doorway and listened to the popping, which went on with varying intensity, still more figures sped past the end of my street. I recalled the perplexing fact that as we had driven into the town past the barrier, there had been no one on guard. I learned later that, with unbelievable stupidity, the authorities had sent the army out toward Monastir and had left the city with a mere handful of soldiers to deal with the revolutionaries. It was this fact, I suppose, of finding nobody on guard, which had frightened our driver, and no sooner had we alighted before the doorway in that steep, narrow street off the *Via Egnatia* than he had demanded his fare and galloped away up hill and out of sight. 'You'll have to get another carriage,' Pollyni had told me in an anxious voice. 'You'll find one down near the big church.' The arrangement was that they would be ready by the time I returned.

"But I had got no further than the corner when the first shots had been fired, and while I hesitated, a couple of soldiers had hurried along, looking back at every other stride, until suddenly one of them had been hit. And I had watched him die. I could still see him, an inert heap in the gutter. And while I debated what I was to do to get out of this unfore-

Digitized by Google

seen difficulty, the popping became a series of sharp, definite, staccato cracks, and a squad of soldiers, armed with short, blunt rifles, shuffled sideways into view. There was a species of discipline in their movements, for they deployed out over the road and dropped on one knee, while one of them stepped briskly to the curb and spoke in a harsh, authoritative tone to some invisible laggard. He came into view very slowly, dragging one leg, and halted, in the very middle of the street, his rifle pointing up hill, his face turned toward their assailants, his hand to his breast fumbling for cartridges. Now and again he lurched as though wounded, but he never relaxed his defiant glare. His hand worked quickly over the breech and he seemed about to swing his weapon round when he must have been hit again, for he toppled over and the thing went off with a flash and roar."

Mr. Spenlove relinquished his leisurely pacing to and fro under the awning and sat down sideways on his camp-stool to roll and light a cigarette. His reflections while this was accomplished remained undisturbed, and his attitude conveyed an impression that he was listening with considerable bitterness to some imaginary reproaches from which he suddenly attempted to defend himself.

"Not so easy," he muttered, flicking the match into the scupper. "Not so easy! Suppose I had

Digitized by Google

suddenly broken out of that doorway and made off up the street? There is no reasonable grounds for doubt that the officer who was directing that little squad of disciplined men was the person who afterward gained the White Tower and held the city barrier and the sea-front until fresh troops arrived to overpower the apostles of liberty. Suppose, I say, I had suddenly scared him by bolting up that narrow street? No, not so easy. And yet it wasn't easy, either, to remain even as long as I did. For at a word from him the kneeling men raised their rifles and fired once, twice—a crescendo of crashes reverberating from the buildings opposite. And then they all ran diagonally across the street into the shadows, and for a space there was silence.

"And even then," went on Mr. Spenlove, "I did not run. Not from courage, you understand, but fear. I tiptoed out of my doorway and walked quickly up the street without making any noise. I was preoccupied with the question of getting back to the ship. We should have to walk. I tried to lay out the city in my mind. If we walked upward say, and struck a street going westward and parallel with the *Via Egnatia*, we might eventually strike another thoroughfare running down to the port. I was thinking this out as I hurried. I considered the wisdom of remaining indoors until the morning,

Digitized by Google

and I believe now that is what I would have done eventually, anyhow. I looked back several times. The electric globe, hanging high, had gone out or been put out, and there were no lights in any of the houses. I imagined the inmates sitting silently behind their shutters, listening and waiting for a renewal of the uproar. You must understand that I was experiencing nothing more than a very natural exaltation of nerves, with an undertow of anxiety for the ship. I pictured Jack in a great state, wondering where I was, a state probably complicated by the scandalized Tonderbeg's abashed revelations. As Jack grew older, he grew fond of saying there was no fool like an old fool, forgetting that there is another kind, the middle-aged fool, who has the distinction of comprehending and enjoying his folly. Of course, Tonderbeg would get himself snubbed, and Jack would retire to his cabin to muse upon the serious news. So I reflected as I hurried up that dark street toward a faint ray of light which indicated the door of her house. I had no forebodings up to this moment; only speculations. And even when that light was darkened for an instant as someone stood in the doorway, and I heard Pollyni's voice calling hoarsely to know who I was, I had no premonition. The next moment her high-heeled shoes clicked on the sidewalk as she ran toward me, and when she came up to

Digitized by Google

me she grasped me and stared at me in a profoundly mysterious fashion. I will not say to you what I now believe lay at the back of that girl's mind. You would say I had lost my faith in humanity, but you would be mistaken. You would be forgetting her descent from the Pandour hordes who came galloping up out of the Caucasus so many centuries ago. You would be forgetting that to those people neither 'life, liberty, nor the pursuit of happiness' are particularly sacred things, or things to be achieved in a spirit of altruistic piety. But I can tell you it was because of that enigmatic stare of hers that I have emphasized her part in this story of Captain Macedoine's daughter. You might say she had the temperament for the leading rôle in the play. . . . She said in her hoarse musical contralto, 'We were ready and we were coming down to meet you.'

"'Well?' I said. She stood in front of me, holding my arms and impeding my advance.

"'Well!' she repeated, slowly. 'You do not know what has happened,' and again she regarded me in the way I have described.

"'No,' I said, returning her scrutiny, 'I don't understand what you mean by what has happened. I have seen a shocking thing down there. They are fighting in the *Via Egnatia*. Some are dead. We can't go that way, I'm afraid.'

Digitized by Google

"Suddenly she dropped her hands from my arms and breathed deeply. 'Come!' she said, and hurried away from me. I had spoken the truth. I did not understand her, but her demeanour alarmed me. I followed, watching the silhouette of her body sway as she took her long strides. I had a fugitive notion that this performance was symbolical of our emotional existence—our souls pursue one another through a steep darkness, the victims of unpremeditated suspicions and fears. As she reached the lighted doorway she swung round and spread out her hands with a gesture of pity and grief. 'Look!' she said. 'As we came out someone fired. She was in front. It was not my fault. . . . You see.'

"While she spoke I endeavoured to collect my forces. I looked down. I had a vivid impression of emerging from a place of imprisonment, a place of great noise and activity and warm, pleasant excitement, and of seeing before me a cold gray plain extending into the distance. And over this plain, I reflected, I was to travel, alone. I looked down, I say. I heard the girl beside me murmur hoarsely into my ear, and stoop to lift the form that lay motionless at our feet.

"'No!' I said, drawing her back. 'This is for me to do. I will carry my own dead.'"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX

AND the rest," said Mr. Spenlove in a colourless voice, "is by way of being an epilogue of detached and vagrant memories. They come to me now and again, a sad sequence of blurred pictures in which I can see my own figure in unfamiliar poses. There is the night which I passed in that house, a night of endless recapitulations and regrets. There was the moment when I turned from the bed, where the dead girl lay, and found the other girl, with her extraordinary vitality, close beside me, scrutinizing me as though I were a problem she found it impossible to solve. And when I walked through into the other room and sat down beyond a table on which a tiny oil lamp burned, she advanced into the circle of light, so that her shadow was gigantic on the wall and ceiling behind her, and looked across at me. There was a subtle change in her since we had met in the street outside. She seemed full of an insatiable curiosity to know my thoughts. And my thoughts just then were not for any one to know. My thoughts re-

Digitized by Google

sembled a flock of wild birds which had been streaming steadily in one direction when a bomb had exploded among them and sent them swirling and careening in crazy circles. And she did this more than once. While I sat there in the semi-darkness beyond the circle of light she came in with some bread and a bottle of wine, and set a plate and glass beside them on the table, and then, after watching me for a moment, went away again. There was a faint murmur from below where a number of women from neighbouring houses were conversing in low tones with the old Greek woman who seemed to be the *concierge*, and thither no doubt the girl retired. And once while I drowsed for a spell I was aware of her as she stepped softly up to me, peered into my face, and then, as I opened my eyes, withdrew without speaking. Yes, I drowsed time and again; but toward dawn I grew wakeful and the necessity of returning to the ship became urgent once more. You will understand, of course, that it was not a fear of being killed that held me in that room. I was in a mood up there which rendered me perfectly indifferent to material risks of that nature. It was rather an illogical and irresistible instinct to play up to the event. I was intensely aware that the episode, by reason of its frustrating climax, was already standing away from me, and I was unable to

Digitized by Google

relinquish my position. I felt that when I was gone away from that room I would be at the mercy of a frightful and solitary future. It may sound strange to you, spoken in cold blood, but that dead girl was nearer to me during my vigil than any living woman had ever been! I went over everything that had happened while I sat and watched the light of the three candles flicker over those exquisite features. And I discovered in the confused tangle of emotions one bright scarlet thread of gladness that no more harm could come to her. For mind you, I was wise enough to know the perilous problems in store for her, even if she had come home with us. I was under no illusions about either of us. It was the tremendous risks which had allured me. I have said I believed she would have won out, and I do. But how? Women win out in all sorts of extraordinary ways. I am not so sure some of them would not be better in their graves. . . .

"But I went down at last. And the girl Pollyni met me in the corridor below. She said: 'Are you going on board the ship?' 'Yes,' I answered, 'I am going on board the ship. What else can I do?' She shrugged her shoulders and looked at the floor. I started to go out. I experienced a sudden irritable anger.

"'Why do you ask?' I demanded.

Digitized by Google

"'Well,' she said in a low tone, 'you know her father is sick.'

"'Oh,' I answered, 'I will come ashore again, of course. But just now, you understand, I must go back. I may be wanted.' And I went out quickly into the chill air of the dawn.

"And the intense silence of that cold, closed, steep street daunted me. I felt, as I surveyed those silent and repellent façades, with their enigmatic shutters, a sensation of extraordinary loneliness and dreary failure. I envisaged the *Manola* lying snug and respectable at her berth in the little harbour, all the dingy details of her stark utility apparent in the transparent morning air. I saw myself ascending the gangway, and the startled air of amused surprise on the face of the night watchman projected abruptly from the gallery. I saw Jack, asleep in his room, his mouth open, his limbs flung wide, his hairy chest showing through the open pajamas, a rumbling snore filling the neat room. And I came to the singular and illogical conviction that if I went aboard immediately I would regret it. I should carry away with me into the future a memory of shabby and furtive behaviour. And I did not want that, I can assure you. I wanted this thing to remain somewhat as I had experienced it. I felt that I must make the most of it. We grow very humble in our

Digitized by Google

emotional demands as we grow older, I observe. We who go to sea especially. One of the inevitable products of our rolling existence. And I stood, irresolute, in front of the open doorway leading to the flat above, and Pollyni Sarafov stood there watching me. She came down.

"'Let me tell you something,' she began. 'I think you ought to go and see her father. Didn't you say you used to know him in America? Just think! She was all he had.'

"'What am I to say to him if I go?' I demanded. 'You know very well that he thinks she is . . . eh? How shall I explain when I come in?'

"'Never mind that,' she said, shaking her head. 'You come.'

"And she became extraordinarily light-hearted when I said I would. She ran in and got her hat and parasol. She came out prinking and clicking her high-heeled shoes, and she placed her hand as lightly as a feather upon my arm. Perhaps she really needed my support down that steep, narrow street, but I read into that delicate gesture a profound moral significance. And I can tell you another thing," added Mr. Spenlove with some vehemence. "I found myself regarding the whole sum of human grief with moody suspicion. I recalled a fine phrase I had once read of 'the great stream of human tears

Digitized by Google

falling always through the shadows of the world,' and I dismissed it as fudge. I was half tempted to wonder whether the world, which had grown out of stage coaches and sailing ships and Italian opera, had not grown out of grief at the same time. And by heavens, what has happened during the past two or three years has only solidified that grisly conviction. We seem to have been born just in time to see the end of the spiritual world, the final disintegration of the grand passions of the human soul. Oh, we keep up a certain pretence from force of habit, but we are being forced to realize that the philosophers were on the right track when they foretold the subjugation of man by the instruments of civilization. Or you can say that the *tempo* of our modern life is too fast to permit our accepted notions of the elemental comedy and tragedy of existence to register with any permanence. The newspaper scribbler talks incessantly of Armageddon, heroism, patriotism, sacrifice, and so on, and we wait in vain for our hearts to respond to their invocations. We discover with surprise that we are as incapable of profound sorrow as of a high resolve. We are swept on out of sight. We forget, or we die and are forgotten. We are beginning to wonder now and again whether all our boasted science and mechanical discoveries are not evil after all, whether the old monks were such bigoted fools

Digitized by Google

as we have been taught to believe when they denounced knowledge as a danger to the soul. But we have very little time in which to reflect. We rush on to fresh improvements, and we find ourselves less admirable than before.

"And so, as we went down that cold, remorseless street of shuttered houses, away from the chamber of death, we were silent, but we thought not at all of death. Perhaps we did at the turning into the *Via Egnatia*, for the dead soldier was still lying where he had fallen in the shallow channel that ran just there by an orchard wall. He was lying on his face, with his hands close to his head, and his pose gave one a peculiar impression that he was looking with intense curiosity into some subterranean chamber. His attitude was not at all suggestive of death. It was quite easy, looking across at him, to imagine him suddenly leaping to his feet, beckoning us to come and have a peep through his newly found hole. The soldiers we encountered hurriedly descending the street from the Citadel and running across to vanish into the White Tower were much more like dead men, strange to say. Their faces were pallid with lack of sleep, and they bore the hard-lipped stare of disciplined men who have suddenly lost faith in their commanders. They paid no more attention to us than to the stones of the roadway. They ran past

Digitized by Google

us laden with bread and vegetables, hastily corralled from friendly houses built about the Citadel, for these were mostly families with military traditions. One carried on his curved back a newly slaughtered sheep, the bright red blood dribbling from the gashed gullets, and the animal's eyes looking back at us with an expression of intelligent comprehension, as though it were fully aware of the whole business. In the clear light of early morning there was a good deal of the automaton about all of us. And as we crossed the road where it debouched upon the quays and started to walk out of the city by the deserted barrier, a short and determined-looking person in a tight-fitting blue tunic looked out of the door of the Tower and eyed us critically. And I really believe the only reason why he neglected to tell one of his men to put an experimental bullet into us was the fact that the girl still had her hand on my arm. And she carried her parasol. We walked on and presently we were out of sight of the sea and the Tower. Across the blue sky large companies of billowing white clouds were gathering from the mouth of the Gulf. Suddenly Miss Sarafov murmured without taking her eyes from the ground.

"'Was that man dead?'

"Now," said Mr. Spenlove, "you may call me fanciful and overwrought, but I read into that simple

Digitized by Google

question a secret desire to accustom my mind to the idea of death as a frequent and common sort of affair. I looked at her suspiciously and she raised her eyes to mine full of a clear feminine candour. She may have known that my morose taciturnity came from a consciousness that she had divined the fundamental flaw in my emotional equipment and was using it for her own purposes, but she did not show it. And while I was debating the question with myself, I heard her add, in a shy, delicate tone, 'There is a little garden just here, on the water.'

"And from that moment I let her have her way and followed her lead. We crossed the street. I heard her say it was too early to go to the *Rue Paleologue*, which might be true, but struck me as irrelevant. And then my attention was drawn to a high square house standing in a dusty yard and decorated with a long board bearing the words *École Universelle*.

"'I was at school there before we went to America,' Miss Sarafov remarked, poking at the place with her parasol. 'It was a good school then, very solid instruction,' she added, 'but now it isn't any good.'

"'Is the instruction no longer sufficiently solid?' I asked.

"'The mistresses are all progressives,' she returned.

Digitized by Google

'Here is the little garden,' and we came out upon a small place of grass and shrubs, flanked by a pair of *kiosques* joined by a wooden balustrade. It was deserted, as one might expect at that hour; but Miss Sarafov remarked that we might have coffee and rusks if I liked, and walked across the sward to a door in a neighbouring house. I went into one of the *kiosques* and sat facing the calm waters of the Gulf. Facing something else, too, which was anything but calm. For I was unable to rid myself of a fear that when this episode was completed I should be in a very difficult position. I should be like a man who had been struggling in the waves, only to find himself suddenly flung up high and dry upon a desolate and inhospitable shore, where he would in all probability perish of privation. And then, if you like to carry the parable a little further, this man becomes aware of a siren calling him back into the watery tumult . . . . And you know, I doubted my ability to manage the situation if I were to go back. One needs a special education, or let us say, temperament, to deal successfully with sirens. And as Miss Sarafov came into the *kiosque* and sat down beside me, I felt the immediate necessity of making my position clear. I began at once to tell her that the events of the previous day had changed everything. I should in all probability never come to Saloniki

Digitized by Google

again. And while I felt it my duty to see Captain Macedoine and also to return Miss Sarafov herself to her mother, I should then go back to the ship for good.

"'And I shall never see you again,' she exclaimed, looking out across the Gulf, in a kind of magical abstraction.

"'A small privation,' I murmured. She rose suddenly and stood by the door of the *kiosque*, her sturdy and extraordinarily vital figure silhouetted against the shining water.

"'Not so small,' she muttered in her hoarse contralto, 'not so small, after what has happened.'

"'What do you want, Miss Sarafov?' I asked, sharply. 'You seem to accuse me of a failure in friendship.'

"'What do I want?' she echoed, without turning round. 'Why do you suppose I wanted Artemisia to send for you and go to England? Because she was going to take me, too.'

"'Take you, too?' I said, feebly.

"'Sure!' she shrilled, turning round, 'to live with her. She hadn't a friend in the world to turn to and she'd have gone crazy living alone in England while you were at sea. We had it fixed up. And now it is all over, and I have to stay here and live through—what? I don't know.'

Digitized by Google

"'But I understood Captain Macedoine to hint that you were his favourite,' I observed.

"'That's his way of talking. Mother thinks he's wonderful. Of course, if his investments went up, as they might if there was a revolution, he would be pretty rich. But just now his business doesn't bring in much. And it was Kinaitsky who started him in it. He owes Kinaitsky a lot of money.'

"'And you think you would like to go to England?' I said. She shrugged her shoulders, and made a movement of her hand as though casting something away. 'No use talking about it,' she returned, gruffly. I was silent, and after she had watched me for a moment she came over quickly and sat down beside me again.

"'Pardon,' she whispered, 'but I had so little time. I knew you would go away and I had to speak. I thought you might not be angry.'

"'I am not,' I said, 'only sorry. You had made a very special place for yourself in my memory,' I went on. 'I wish you had not disillusioned me. You were entirely charming. Why should you go and spoil it all? I would have thought of you always as my friend's friend. . . .'

"She sat in a tense, eager pose looking up into my face, a pose that suddenly relaxed and she sighed. I did not see it then, in my exalted mood of idealized

Digitized by Google

emotion; but I don't suppose a woman values any reputation less than one for altruistic charm. Probably because she is aware of its inevitably spurious nature. Miss Sarafov sighed, and the intense vitality of her features was obscured for an instant as by a shadow. An idea seemed to strike her and she looked intently at me again.

"'Women don't matter much to you,' she observed, quietly, and fell silent again.

"And here again," said Mr. Spenlove, "was a picture which comes back to me now—the scene in that little *kiosque*, a circular chamber crowded with the brilliant and disturbing reflections of the sunlight on the surface of the sea, shadow and gleam moving in complex rhythm across our faces and figures as we sat there, two beings destined to be forever strangers. She came into view for a little space, and vanished again, a mysterious, alluring, and magical presence, yet conveying no hint of any misfortune. She gave the impression of an easy and felicitous balance of forces, a complex of resilient strength, to which we poor Anglo-Saxons rarely attain. And sitting in the dancing reflections of the sunlights, she seemed a veritable emanation of the spirit of enchanted desire. I see her now, confronting the obscure motives of my behaviour in good-humoured sadness, while an ancient person in baggy black trousers and dingy

Digitized by Google

scarlet sash tottered forward with a copper tray bearing tiny cups and a brass pot with a long handle.

"And in direct sequence, not very clear but clear compared with the shadowy oblivion that intervened, comes a picture of him whom I have called more than once a master of illusion. And I suppose he has a right to the title for he maintained the pose to the end of the chapter. I had imagined that it would be a painful duty to break the news of his daughter's death to him. I saw myself offering my condolences and soothing a father's anguish. I pictured an old man bowed with grief. But it did not happen that way at all. I forgot that masters of illusion have no use for facts, not even for such facts as grief or death, until they have been transmuted into some strange emotional freaks which will inspire the spectator with awe. And Fate, who is something of an illusionist herself, plays into the hands of such as he.

"I remember, for instance, sitting heavily in Mrs. Sarafov's front room, and telling that handsome, self-possessed woman in a few brief words what had happened to Captain Macedoine's daughter. How a wounded soldier's rifle, discharged by accident in our direction, had left us paralyzed and aghast at the inconceivable efficacy and finality of its achievement. I remember that, and then I remember follow-

Digitized by Google

ing her into Captain Macedoine's house. About nine o'clock, I should say. And Mrs. Sarafov must have sent a messenger in advance, for Captain Macedoine already knew what I had to say. We stood in the vestibule near the foot of the stairs, Mrs. Sarafov whispering that he was being treated by his doctor with special baths. The doctor came every morning, I was informed in a respectful tone. And while we stood there, we heard a commotion upstairs, and a strange procession began to descend the narrow and shallow steps. I remember turning away hurriedly from a picture on the wall, a stark, angular composition of muscular male nudes in attitudes registering classical grief, of the body of Hector being brought back to the city—and finding Captain Macedoine, supported by a lean man in a frock coat and by two women, coming down. And perhaps it was the contemplation of that picture which called to my mind with irresistible force another picture, seen many years before. It was a picture of vivid colouring and violently complex action—the Emperor Vitellius coming down a steep, narrow street with the mob and the soldiery hacking and yelling and spitting around him, his gross corpulence rolling and rearing and staggering, the rich robes ripping away from the creases of sleezy tissue, the bright blood spurting from neck and arms, the eyes rolling

Digitized by Google

wide, in a naked horror of dissolution, toward the flawless blue of a Roman sky. And the recollection was not so irrelevant as you might imagine. Captain Macedoine wore a voluminous bath robe of dark purple and he wore sandals on his feet. As he descended he rolled and staggered, and his supporters rolled and staggered to maintain themselves and him, all this commotion giving the little group the complicated activity of a crowd of people wrestling with an old man in a purple robe. And Mrs. Sarafov advanced to assist him, running up several steps and raising an arm, as though to strike, but with the real intention of support. I remember, too, the small wayward feet and the thick, smooth, hairless calves beneath the robe, strange in one so decrepit. I daresay, you know, he would have been something of that sort in that part of the world twenty generations earlier. Perhaps there was something aback of his adumbrations concerning his ancient lineage. Perhaps he was not simply a ship chandler in a small way, but the reincarnation of some sinister pro-consul who sat on the terrace of his marble villa among the distant ranges, and watched with a contemptuous and intellectual sneer the hordes of peasantry as they trudged into the cities to sacrifice their daughters to the savage and inexorable Cabirian deities. I had that fantastic notion as they paused at the foot

Digitized by Google

of the stair and he moved his head slowly from side to side, the mouth pursed, the eyes set in a stony, unseeing stare, the bathrobe of purple towelling slipping from one shoulder. And then they moved forward again, away from me, into a room sparsely set with French furniture and dominated by a lofty chandelier still shrouded in its summer muslin, and the door swung to, leaving me to contemplate the picture in its tarnished frame of the body of Hector being brought back to Troy.

"And I must have sat there, in a sort of cane lounge, for a long time, since when we emerged from the doorway, the doctor and I, the *Rue Paleologue* was a shadowless glare of thin sunshine. He had come out of that room with bent head, closing the door absently and advancing toward the lounge where reposed his hat and stick beside me, when he took occasion to glance at me. Immediately he became alert and active.

"'You have sustained a shock,' he murmured, counting my pulse.

"'Is that it?' I returned, and he smiled, taking a capsule of white powder from his wallet and handing it to me. A carafe stood on a table near by. He poured out a glass of water.

"'Looks like it,' he remarked in excellent colloquial idiom; 'put this on your tongue and wash it

Digitized by Google

down with some water. Feel better? Come out into the fresh air. Take a drive with me if you like.'

"'I want to talk to you,' I explained, as I followed him out. He hailed a man standing by a carriage several doors away and conversing with a servant.

"'Very nice of you, I'm sure. Step in. Just the day for a constitutional.' And then, as we started off and the carriage rolled round the corner out of sight, his mood changed. 'Friend of the family?' he asked, keenly.

"'You can call me that. Of Miss Macedoine certainly.'

"'Now there was a woman!' he ejaculated, opening an immense cigarette case, like a bandolier, and offering it to me. 'I admire her very much, indeed. I was called in about a year ago. But you say you are a friend of hers. And she's dead. I suppose I shall have to go and attend to it. Only you know what's going on. This confounded Committee of Liberty and Progress have carried out a *coup d' état* and there'll be very little liberty of movement until they're squashed. Between ourselves, that is. Thank the Lord my practice is out here among the Europeans. And it's bad enough here, I can tell you.'

"'You have lived in England?' I interposed.

"His lean, dark face wrinkled with humour.

Digitized by Google

"'Well, considering I was casualty surgeon at St. Barnabas Hospital for nearly three years, I rather think I have. Yes, I took my degrees at Guys, and I don't mind admitting I wish I was in London now. But I have an old mother and seven sisters who have never been farther than Volo in their lives, and so I resign myself.'

"'Greek?' I enquired. He flushed dark red.

"'Scarcely,' he said in a suppressed sort of voice. 'I won't bother you with local animosities. We are Spanish Jews. Not very good ones, perhaps, but we keep to ourselves and manage to keep the wolf from the door. And now,' he said with a brisk yet courteous movement of his hand to my arm, 'who the blazes are you, and what do you want to know?'

"I told him succinctly, and he nodded to each fact of importance as he took it in.

"'Mind you,' I told him, 'I don't defend her behaviour. She shouldn't have told her father she was married when she wasn't. He might have——' Doctor Sadura made a gesture of flinging something away impatiently.

"'Oh, pardon me, but it wouldn't have made any difference with that old humbug.' I looked at him in amazement.

"'I said humbug,' he insisted. 'A thorough old humbug. Do you know what he's suffering

Digitized by Google

from? Illusions of grandeur, we call it in the profession. A form of megalomania. Oh, yes, he's got some money, no doubt, or I shouldn't render him professional services. But he thinks he owns the whole country clear up to Uskub. Burbles away for hours to me about his plans for developing the territory. He's got a lot of concessions that aren't worth the paper they are printed on. What's the use of concessions when the government's going in and out like a wheezy old concertina, when the agriculturalists simply wouldn't know what he was talking about and would come out with long knives and sickles and slash his developing parties about the legs? Rubbish! Illusions of grandeur, I tell you. As for the girl, you know her better than I do. The man who protected her, Kinaitsky, is a very fine chap indeed, but he isn't the sort of person I'd introduce to my sisters, if you know what I mean. Distinctly not.'

"'And yet I understand he married a Jewess not long ago,' I said.

"'Yes, very rich. Quite a different matter. Immense tobacco properties. You see, although he is not an Ottoman, his family have lived under Ottoman government so long that they are strong supporters of the old régime. They are like us Jews. They are good business men and they lend the old Ottoman

Digitized by Google

families money in return for franchises which are very profitable to people with affiliations in Paris and London, and so forth. I don't say it's a perfect system,' Doctor Sadura went on, 'but it suits the country.'

"'Then where does our friend with his illusions of grandeur come in?' I enquired.

"'Nowhere, unless there was a revolution and a lot of these old estates came into the market, and the new government found time to think of him. But it is building on pretty rotten foundations, I can tell you. You don't suppose he is the first to think of such a thing.'

"'No, there is a gentleman named Nikitos,' I remarked.

"'I dare say there is,' said the doctor, 'but I never heard of him.'

"'He aspired to the hand of Miss Macedoine,' I said, 'and he accompanied them here from the Island of Ipsilon.'

"The doctor whistled. The carriage stopped at this moment in front of an imposing residence with gigantic iron gates shutting off a curved drive. The doctor alighted, turned round, and regarded me with considerable interest.

"'Well, I'm blowed,' he observed, coolly, and at once attacked the massive gates. I watched him

Digitized by Google

moving one of them very slowly and edging through. He was a most stimulating person to be with. Vitality radiated from him. I have no doubt he was a very successful physician. Whom he was attending within this opulent home I never knew—perhaps another case of illusions of grandeur. He came down the drive again quickly, slipped between the gates, and sprang in beside me. He gave me the impression of playing an extremely strong game of tennis.

"'Well?' I said, as he slipped his wallet into the pocket in front of us, and took out his formidable cigarette case. 'Is M. Nikitos suffering from the same malady as Captain Macedoine?' The doctor made a grimace.

"'I remember that chap,' he said, 'though I don't recall hearing his name. He acted on behalf of Captain Macedoine. An international journalist, whatever that may be. We are rather inclined to avoid journalists of all sorts here, you know. First I thought he had picked these people up at the Custom House and got himself appointed dragoman. Then I suspected when I was called in to see the girl that he and the old man were . . . you understand that we doctors get into some queer *ménages*. But aspired to the hand, you say.'

"'Yes, and makes extravagant claims to what he calls purity.'

Digitized by Google

"'Oh, that's a very common hallucination,' said the doctor. He laughed gratingly. 'Compared with the people who employ them, you know, they must in time get to feel they are immaculate. I don't blame them. But it's an hallucination.'

"'Do you explain everything in pathological terms?' I asked.

"'How do you mean?' demanded he.

"'You seem to imagine we are all the victims of some mental disease.'

"'No, not at all. But the higher types of intellectualism appear to me slightly mad. The Ego,' added Doctor Sadura, 'is a very peculiar animal. It feeds on strange things like empire-building on a Balkan dung-heap, and purity, and—oh, all sorts of things.'

"'Go on,' I said, 'you have evidently included me in the list. How would you describe it?'

"'Well,' he replied, rubbing his nose, 'from what you tell me, I shouldn't pronounce you in any great danger of anything. We can say you have been suffering from a faith in an impracticable felicity.' And he laughed.

"'But that is a condemnation of romance!' I protested. He shrugged his shoulders.

"'We shall never run short of romance,' he declared. 'The great thing is to avoid getting mixed up

Digitized by Google

in it or if you do, you mustn't imagine, as you were about to do, that it can be carried about the world. Of course I know there is a fatal fascination about the idea. I thought of something like that myself at one time. A wonderful experience! But it wouldn't have done.'

"'You don't believe in love then?' I asked, curious to know how the brother of seven sisters regarded this matter.

"'Oh, love!' he echoed, shrugging again. 'Love is nothing. It happens all the time to everybody. It is the romantic business I thought you were speaking of.'

"'You draw a distinction, then?'

"'Why, of course. Look here, I'll tell you. I had a wild, romantic passion once. Think of it, a casualty surgeon in a London hospital, carried away, positively carried away. And the subject of it was an Irish colleen. Yes, I was infatuated simply and solely with that girl's green cloak and hood and her green stockings and black pumps. I have been told since by an Irishman that girls in Ireland never dream of wearing such a rig. That doesn't matter. I had read of Irish colleens, just as you, for example, might have read of Persian princesses or Russian countesses, and the glamour of it carried me away. And this colleen of mine, with her green cloak which

Digitized by Google

she'd got from a theatrical costumier, represented a romantic ideal. Very nice clever sort of girl, a newspaper woman she was. But it wouldn't have done. Never try to make an episode anything else. We parted and I believe she's married now.'

"'That about sums it up,' I said.

"'It does. Get a night's sleep and you'll see it in the same light. You have had an accumulation of romantic impacts, and I expect a sea-going life leaves one very much at the mercy of stray impressions. A ship's surgeon once remarked to me that no human intellect could survive a nautical training.' And he laughed again.

"That," said Mr. Spenlove, "was how he talked. A provocative, positive sort of man. There was, if you will excuse the simile, something antiseptic in his character. I could have driven about and talked to him all day. He was charged with sane opinions on life. Humorous, too. When I suggested that Captain Macedoine might not survive his daughter's death, he made the whimsical remark that illusions of grandeur act like an anæsthetic upon the patient's emotions. And I shall not forget the last remark he uttered as I stood beside his carriage to say farewell. The red roofs and domes of the city stretched away below us and I could see the smoke coming over the warehouse from the *Manola's* funnel. He had

Digitized by Google

promised to do certain things for me. If you climb up some day to the Protestant cemetery you will find out what some of those things were. And he was good enough to express a hope that I might come to Saloniki again. I replied that I had profited immensely by his conversation and he nodded, saying:

"'Yes, that's right. But what you really need, you know, is what old-fashioned people in England call the consolation of religion.'

"'That is a novel prescription for a doctor,' I retorted.

"'Perhaps it is,' he admitted, holding out his hand, 'but depend upon it, nothing else will do.'

"'You know the usual stereotyped advice is to get married?'

"'You would still need the consolation of religion,' he remarked, dryly. 'No, the fact is, real love is too uncertain, too uncommon.'

"'Surely,' I protested.

"'A fact,' he insisted, simply. 'I once picked up the works of a young Arab poetess who afterward slew herself in her lover's arms. And the burden of all her songs was that the only logical culmination of love, if it be genuine, is death. I offer you that for your Western mind to ponder. Good-bye and good luck.'

Digitized by Google

"And there I was," said Mr. Spenlove, lighting a fresh cigarette, "with a whole brand-new set of consolatory impressions to brood upon, left to pursue my way back to the ship and take up a safe and humdrum existence once more. The episode was over, and it would be unwise to try and make it anything else. And I had been presented with a novel and extremely impracticable test of love which preoccupied by its stark beauty. I had the sudden fancy, as I climbed the ruined wall that runs down from the Citadel and started to thread the narrow streets toward the port, of that Arab poetess, buried in a fragrant and silent garden among cypresses, and her lover, whom I pictured an infidel, keeping her in memory by a bronze statuette. I saw it on a table in his room, a tiny thing of delicate art, the exquisite creature depicted at the supreme moment of death and passion. For of course the lover would not adopt that extreme view of his obligations toward love. Full of regret he would continue a mediocre existence. . . .

"And yet," said Mr. Spenlove, standing up and looking out from under bent brows at the faint lifting of the darkness beyond the headland, "and yet, my friends, as I picked my way down toward the port, it occurred to me to wonder whether our Western views are so full of ultimate wisdom as we imagine; whether

Digitized by Google

there may not be something in life which we miss because we are so careful of life. At this moment we are vigorously striving to impose our Occidental conceptions of happiness and justice and government upon a good many millions to whom our arrogant assumptions of the Almighty's prerogatives is becoming an incomprehensible infliction. It wouldn't do, I suppose, to suggest that so far from being a matter of mathematical progression, life has a secret rhythm of its own. And while I was working away at this alarming line of thought, I was passing along narrow streets crammed with evidences of desires other than ours. I passed women veiled save for their sombre, enigmatic eyes. I passed the doors of temples where men lay prostrate upon strips of carpet, the saffron-coloured soles of their bare feet gleaming distinct in the sunlight. I was assailed by troops of children whose tremendous vitality and unabashed enterprise made me tremble with forebodings for the future. Was it possible, I wondered, if our system didn't give the less admirable and the cunning among us a long advantage? Which they were beginning to take, I added. I found myself endeavouring to take soundings and find out, so to speak, how far we were off shore. Mind you, it wasn't simply that as far as I could see we were busily producing an inferior social order. I was

Digitized by Google

trying to think out what the ultimate consequences would be if we continued to dilute and rectify and sterilize our emotions. I wanted to see beyond that point, but I found I couldn't. I hadn't the power, and I'm afraid that nowadays I lack the courage as well.

"And then I lost myself awhile in a bazaar where I saw sundry gentlemen from the country hurriedly disposing of short, blunt rifles at a reckless discount for cash, and eventually I came out into a steep street which led down to the sea, a street full of an advancing swarm of armed men and banners and carriages and the shrill blare of trumpets pulsed by the thudding of drums. A squad of motley individuals in civilian garb with red sashes across their bosoms and rifles in their hands marched ahead of a brass band and breasted the slope. At intervals came carriages containing the leaders of this new régime. I observed the burly person in the fez and wearing a silver star. He sat alone in an open landau, his frock coat gathered up so that his muscular haunches could be seen crushing the salmon-coloured upholstery, his massive calves almost bursting out of the cashmere trousers. He held himself rigidly upright, his hand at the salute, his big black eyes swivelling from side to side as the crowd surged up and applauded. He had been a

Digitized by Google

driver on the railroad, I read later on, when his photo, with the silver star, appeared in our illustrated papers at home as one of the leaders of the Party of Liberty and Progress. Still an engine-driver, I should say, recalling him as he rode past that morning, not particularly attentive to signals or pressure-gauges either, if what we hear be true. Broad-based he sat there, leaning slightly forward, the tight blue tunic creasing across the small of his strong, curved back, his short, thick feet encased in elastic side boots, his long nails curving over the ends of his fingers like claws. And it occurred to me, as I stood on the marble steps of that office building and watched him being borne upward to the Citadel where no doubt he rendered substantial aid to the cause of Liberty and Progress, that it is to the credit of the despots and cut-throats of history that they were perfectly honest in their behaviour. They sought dominion and got it. They sought gold and got it. They sought the blood and the concubines of their enemies and got them. And they rarely deemed it worth while to pretend that they were apostles of liberty and progress. That is one of our modern improvements. . . . I was musing thus as the platoons of ragged revolutionaries shuffled past, when I found myself gazing at M. Nikitos, seated with crossed legs in the corner of a shabby one-

Digitized by Google

horse carriage, and raising an unpleasant-looking silk hat. He was, I take it, one of the secretaries of the Committee of Liberty and Progress, possibly their future international expert. It suddenly occurred to me that there is a gigantic brotherhood in the world, a brotherhood of those who have never willingly done a day's work in their lives and never intend to. We have been so mesmerized by the phrase the Idle Rich, that we have completely forgotten that sinister and perilous pestilence, the Idle Poor. Looking at M. Nikitos, with his hair standing straight up on the lower slopes of his head like fir trees on the sides of a mountain and his opaque black eyes staring with fanatical intensity at nothing in particular, one was irresistibly reminded of a fungus. The incipient black beard, which was making its appearance in patches on his chin and jaws, lent a certain strength to the impression of fungoid growth, and encouraged a dreadful sort of notion that he was beyond the normal and lovable passions of men. He was, you will remember, a pure man. He sat there, raising that horrible silk hat, exposing, with the mechanical regularity of an automaton his extraordinary frontal configuration, the apotheosis of undesirable chastity. And he had formed a resolution 'which nothing could kill.' I don't doubt it. The resolutions of an individual like that are as substantial and

Digitized by Google

indestructible as he. They persist, in obedience to a melancholy law of human development, from one generation to another. They are as numerously busy just now, under the 'drums and tramplings' of the conflict, as maggots in a cheese. They have the elusive and impersonal mobility of a cloud of poisonous gases. They restore one's belief in a principle of evil, and they may scare us, ultimately, back from their wonderful Liberty and Progress, into an authentic faith in God.

"And I also," resumed Mr. Spenlove, after a moment's silence, "formed a resolution, to refrain from any further participation in alien affairs. I found that I lacked courage for that enterprise, too. It is, after all, a dangerous thing to tamper with one's fundamental prejudices. They very often turn out to be the stark and ugly supports of our health and sanity. I resigned, not without a faint but undeniable tremor of relief, the part of a principal in the play. I have harped to you on this point of my relative importance in the story because it was as a mere super that I entered from the wings and it is as a super in the last act that I retire. I think it was the letter and package M. Kinaitsky sent down to the ship which scared me into obscurity. That and the news that the four o'clock express for Constantinople in which he had been

Digitized by Google

travelling had been blown to atoms by the apostles of Liberty and Progress. You can say it completed the cure, if you like. To read that brief note of courteous and regretful reproach was like encountering a polite phantom. After recording his unalterable conviction that only death or a woman could have prevented an Englishman of honour from keeping an appointment, he begged to trespass so far upon my generous impulses as to send me the package, fully addressed to his brother in London. He would esteem it a favour if I would deliver it in person. The sudden alarming turn of events rendered it imperative to despatch these papers by a secure and unsuspected hand. Should nothing happen, it would be a simple matter for him to communicate with his brother when the present troubles were over. Otherwise . . . and so on. He would not do more than allude to the question of recompense, which would be on a scale commensurate with the magnitude of the obligation. The Captain, no doubt, would consent to keep the package in his safe during the voyage. . . .

"Well, the *Manola* had no safe, but Jack had a formidable old cash-box in his room, and it was with the idea of carrying out the behests of one who could no longer enforce them that I carried the big yellow envelope to Jack and told him how I came by it.

Digitized by Google

Even when it was condensed to suit his bluff mentality, it was a long story. I was astonished at the abstraction into which it threw him. On the road he returned to it again and again. His imagination continually played round the history of 'that gel' as he called her. He could not get used to the startling fact that all this had been going on 'under his very nose, by Jingo!' and he hadn't had the slightest suspicion. 'Forgotten all about her, very nearly. And by the Lord, I thought you had, too, Fred.'

"And I should like," said Mr. Spenlove, "to have heard him tell Mrs. Evans. Perhaps, though, it would not have proved so very sensational after all. It is exceedingly difficult to shock a woman who has been married for a number of years. They seem to undergo a process which, without affording them any direct glimpse into the bottomless pit, renders them cognizant of the dark ways of the human soul. Perhaps you don't believe this. Perhaps you think I am only trying to joke at the expense of a married woman I never liked. Well, try it. Take a benign matron of your own family, who has endured the racking strain of years of family life and tell her your own scandalous history, and she will amaze you by her serene acceptance of your infamous proceedings. So perhaps, as I say, I missed nothing very

Digitized by Google

piquant after all. I had to content myself with the eloquent silence of the respectable but single Tonderbeg, moving about in the cabin, his blond head bent in gentle melancholy, his features composed into an expression of respectful forgiveness.

"'But what was your idea, Fred?' says Jack to me on the road home. He wore habitually a mystified air when we were alone together in his cabin. Jack had become settled in life. His movements had grown more deliberate, and his choleric energy had mellowed into an assured demeanour of authority. You could imagine him the father of a young lady. He sat back in his big chair, motionless save for the cigar turning between thumb and finger, a typical ship-master. He was recognized by the law as competent to perform the functions of a magistrate on the high seas. He no longer plunged like an angry bull into rows with agents. He had arrived at that period of life when all the half-forgotten experiences of our youth, the foolish experiments, the humiliating reverses, come back to our chastened minds and assist us to impose our personalities upon a world ignorant of our former imperfections. And he sat there turning his cigar between thumb and finger, his bright and blood-shot brown eyes fixed in a sort of affectionate glare upon me, his old chum, who had suddenly left him spiritually in the lurch, so to speak. 'What

Digitized by Google

was your idea, Fred? Do you mean to say you hadn't made any plans for the future at all? Just going to let the thing slide?' And the curious thing about his state of mind was that he was attracted by the idea without understanding it. As he sat watching me, mumbling about the future, and the taking of risks and what people at home would say, it was obvious that he was beginning to see the possibilities of such an adventure. He had a vague and nebulous glimpse of something that was neither furtive sensuality nor smug respectability. 'Like something in one of these here novvels,' as he put it with unconscious pathos. And that, I suppose, was as near as he ever attained to an understanding of the romantic temperament. It was fine of him, for he got it through a very real friendship. 'I know you wouldn't do anything in the common way, Fred,' he observed after a long contemplation of his cigar.

"'And would you have stood for it, Jack?' I asked him, 'seeing that Mrs. Evans would hardly have approved, I mean.' He roused up and worked his shoulders suddenly in a curious way, as though shifting a burden.

"'Oh, as to that!' he broke out, and then after a pause he added, 'You can't always go by that. I'd stand for a whole lot from you, Fred.'

"And with that, to the regret of Mr. Tonderbeg

Digitized by Google

who was hovering about outside in the main cabin, our conversation ended.

"We bunkered in Algiers and the newspapers gave us the news of the war. A war so insignificant that most of you young fellows have forgotten all about it. And the captain of a ship in the harbour, hearing we were from Saloniki, came over and informed us that he himself had been bound for that port, with a cargo of stores, but had received word to stop and wait for further orders. He was very indignant, for he had expected some pretty handsome pickings. The point of his story was that the stuff was for Macedoine & Co. who would be able to claim a stiff sum in compensation for non-delivery. I believe the case ran on for years in the courts, and the lawyers did very well out of it.

"And when we reached Glasgow, I took the train to London to deliver the package M. Kinaitsky had entrusted to me. I was curious to learn something of that gentleman's affiliations in England, to discover, if you like, how his rather disconcerting mentality comported itself in a Western environment. The envelope was addressed to Rosemary Lodge, Hampstead, and I left Mason's Hotel in the Strand, on a beautiful day in late autumn, and took the Hamstead bus in Trafalgar Square. It was very impressive, that ascent of the Northern Heights of

Digitized by Google

London, dragging through the submerged squalor of Camden Town, up through the dingy penury of Haverstock Hill, to the clear and cultured prosperity of the smuggest suburb on earth. I happened to know Hampstead since I had once met an artist who lived there, though his studio was in Chelsea. I may tell you about him some day. And when I had walked up the Parliament Hill Road and started across the Heath to find Rosemary Lodge, I had a fairly clear notion of what I should find. For of course it was only a lodge in the peculiar modern English sense. It is part of the harmless hypocrisy of this modern use of language, that one should live in tiny flats in London and call them 'mansions' while a large house standing in its own grounds is styled a lodge. M. Nicholas Kinaitsky evidently kept up an extensive establishment. There seemed a round dozen of servants. Two men and a boy were out in the grounds preparing the roses for the winter. A blue spiral of smoke was blowing away from the chimney of the hothouse against the north wall. And the house itself was one of those spacious and perfectly decorous affairs which have become identified with that extraordinary colony of wealthy aliens who make a specialty of being more English than the English. There was a tennis-court on one side of the house and a young man with a dark, clean-

Digitized by Google

shaven face stood talking to a girl, his hands in his pockets, his shoulders hunched in what one may call the public-school manner, the coat of arms of an ancient Oxford college glowing on the breast of his blue blazer. And indoors the same influence obtained. The pictures and books and furniture presented a front of impregnable insularity. Even the piano was English. Only a photograph in a frame of silver gilt, on a side table, gave a hint—the portrait of a lady with hair dressed in the style of German princesses of Queen Victoria's day, the sinuous curve of her high, tight bodice accented by the great bustle. I noted all this, and sat looking out of the window, which gave upon the autumn splendour of the Heath. There was a pond close by, and an old gentleman in white spats was stooping down to launch a large model yacht on the water. A fairly well-to-do old gentleman, by the gold coins on his watch-chain and the rings which sparkled on his hands. I wondered if he were a relative of the Kinaitskys or whether he only knew them. The yacht started off under a press of canvas, and the old gentleman set off at a trot round the edge, to meet it. I doubt if you could have seen a sight like that anywhere else in the world. He was perfectly unconscious of doing anything at all out of the common. And I dare say it is essential to the rounded com-

Digitized by Google

pleteness of English life that funny and wealthy old gentlemen should sail toy yachts on ponds, while cultured aliens amass fortunes on the Stock Exchange and some of us plow the ocean all our lives.

"And then I was disturbed in my musings by a young lady entering the room, and I rose to explain myself.

"I say she was a young lady, while you will observe I alluded only just now to a girl talking to a young man on the tennis-court. There was that difference. Without giving one any reason for supposing she was married, this one conveyed a subtle impression of being the mistress of the house. She was dark, athletic, simply dressed in black, and extremely plain.

"'Father will be back from the city at half-past four,' she said, when I had explained my errand. 'I am so sorry you will have to wait. You will stay to dinner, of course.'

"I said I did not know if I should stay to dinner as a matter of course, but I thanked her. We drifted into conversation and she gave a very clever impression of being a thorough woman of the world. She was not, of course. She was one of those unfortunate beings who are trained in all the arts of life and who become adepts in all those accomplishments which men take entirely for granted, and who

Digitized by Google

are permitted to grow up imagining men are paladins. And when they marry they experience a shock from which they never recover. Being married is such a different affair from looking after your father's house. When I mentioned my errand, she said her mother and the widowed aunt were at Torquay. Her plain features were suffused with emotion when she mentioned the death of her uncle. She had been his favourite niece. He always paid them a brief visit when he came to London. Very brief. He had a great many people to see in town. Only last year he had given her a set of pearls. And Madame Kinaitsky was so young—it was tragic. The pater had gone over and met her in Paris and she would live with them in future. She stopped in the middle of this and looked at me.

"'You met her, of course, out there?' she asked.

"'Oh, dear no,' I said. "I am only a very casual acquaintance, you understand. I happened to be on the spot, and the very fact that I was not a regular friend gave your uncle the idea that his papers, whatever they are, would be safer with me. I was only too pleased to be of service. You see,' I went on, 'your uncle knew a friend of mine, and so. . . .'

"'A friend of yours?' she queried.

"'Yes, a business friend. Your uncle helped him

Digitized by Google

and his daughter. It was the daughter I knew particularly.'

"'Was she nice?' she demanded, eagerly. 'I mean, was she worthy of his help? He was so good. He helped everybody. There is an orphanage in Saloniki which he supported—oh, most generously. And he asked nothing in return. Oh!' she exclaimed, 'when I think of his life, always thinking of others and doing good, and how at last he found happiness for himself, and then this. . . .' and she gazed out of the window at the old gentleman, who was in trouble with his yacht, which had capsized just beyond walking-stick reach. 'It was like him to trust a stranger,' she murmured.

"'He was good enough to make use of me because I was an Englishman,' I replied.

"'And that was like him, too,' she returned, kindling again. 'It was a great grief to him that business prevented him from living with us here in Hampstead. He loved the English ways. He used to say in joke that he would certainly marry an English wife if he could induce any of them to marry him. But of course he met his fate. He wrote hoping we would love her. We shall do that, of course, but——' she looked out again at the old gentleman who had found a small boy volunteer to paddle out, bare-legged, to salve the yacht.

Digitized by Google

"'But what?' I asked.

"'She will marry again,' Miss Kinaitsky remarked in a low tone. 'I am positive. I do not see how we can blame her. She submitted to the arrangement. But she did not love him. We feel it, because he spoke of her in such terms . . . it was almost adoration. There was never any other woman for him. . . .'

"A silence fell between us because, as you can easily imagine, I had nothing to offer commensurate with the extraordinary exaltation of her mood. It was plain enough that to a woman like her love could not possibly be what I had conceived it. To her it was a divine flame through which she would discern the transfigured features of her beloved. To her it was a supreme sacrament administered in a sacred chamber whence had been shut out all the evil which impregnates the heart of man. And I sat there wondering. When I left that sumptuous and smoothly running mansion and walked out across the Heath in the dusk toward the Spaniards Inn, I was still wondering whether each of us could be right. And I wonder still. For if it were true that love were what she and her kind imagine it to be, then I had never seen it. To me it had been nothing so transcendentally easy as that. To me it had been an obscure commotion, an enigmatic storm on which

Digitized by Google

the human soul, with its drogue of inherited sorrows, was flung on its beam ends, stove in and dismasted, while beyond, far off, there shone a faint light, the flash of a derisive smile, flashing and then suddenly going out. And even now, in the mists of the accumulating years, I wonder still."

For the last time Mr. Spenlove paused, and stepping out to the rail, be stood there, with his back to the men who had listened to his story, silhouetted against the first pale flush of the dawn, looking away to the horizon where could be seen a tiny light, shrouded to point straight toward them, flashing once, twice, with mysterious caution, and then going out.

THE END

Digitized by Google

THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS
GARDEN CITY, N. Y.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
BERKELEY

Return to desk from which borrowed.
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

JAN 2 1948

29May'50MB

20Jan'62EK

REC'D LD

JAN 20 1962

APR 14 1970 94
REC'D LD APR 3'70 -10 AM

LD 21-100m-9,'47(A5702s16)476

Digitized by Google

YB 69685

M126524

161
M14.3
C.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

Digitized by Google